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OF ST. JOHN ·

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THE APOCALYPSE OF ST. JOHN

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THE APOCALYPSE OF ST. JOHN

BY THE
REV. CANON M. G. GLAZEBROOK, D.D.
SOMETIME HEADMASTER OF CLIFTON COLLEGE

PROPERTY OF
THE CHURCH ON THE WAY

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"By identifying the new learning with heresy, you make orthodoxy synonymous with ignorance."—ERASMUS.

FOREWORD

THE series of manuals, of which this is the sixth, is intended to place before readers of ordinary education clear and brief statements of various sides of Christian belief and practice, as they appear in the light of modern criticism and research. The writers are all loyal members of the Church of England. Though they cannot avoid controversy, they write not primarily with controversial intent, but rather to give voice to the convictions of a school in the Church which feels that the times require a fresh setting forth of the essential truths of Christianity.

For the Publications Committee of the Churchmen's Union,

PERCY GARDNER,
Editor.

PREFACE

Dr. Charles' monumental edition of the Apocalypse appears to mark an epoch in the interpretation of that wonderful book, which has so long baffled and fascinated its readers. Only the few have the leisure and the scholarship which is needed to appreciate so elaborate a study. For the benefit of the many who are not so well equipped, and yet desire to enjoy the fruits of his labours, I have attempted in this little volume to set forth the main results which Dr. Charles has attained, and to show what follows from them. But I have not been able to accept quite all his conclusions, nor is he in any way responsible for this exposition.

The text which I have printed for reference is that of the Authorized Version, whose familiar harmony more than atones for occasional inaccuracies. Where corrections seemed absolutely necessary, they have been printed in italic type.

M. G. GLAZEBROOK.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	Methods of Interpretation	1
II.	What is an Apocalypse?	6
III.	The Author of the Apocalypse	15
IV.	The Seer's World	22
V.	The Revealer	33
VI.	The Prologue on Earth	40
VII.	The Prologue in Heaven	45
VIII.	The First Six Seals	50
IX.	The Seventh Seal	61
X.	The Beast	70
XI.	The Seven Vials	79
XII.	Armageddon	90
XIII.	Some Reflections	94
XIV.	The New Jerusalems	102
XV.	Interpretations	114
XVI.	The Four Episodes	126
XVII.	Resurrection and Judgment	134
XVIII.	Vision and Inspiration	148
	The Apocalypse	155

THE APOCALYPSE
OF ST. JOHN

CHAPTER I

METHODS OF INTERPRETATION

The lure of the Apocalypse has from generation to generation proved irresistible. Its interpreters, from the second century to the twentieth, are almost beyond counting; and their books, had they all been preserved, would fill a large library. Some of the causes which have impelled these writers are obvious. In the first place, both the style and the substance of the book offer a challenge to a reverent curiosity. The vividness of the pictures which succeed one another in its pages, the splendour of the imagery, the elevation of the language, and the wide sweep of the mysterious predictions, attract alike the thoughtful and the imaginative. At the same time the pointed references which are made here and there to persons or events which can be identified suggest a hope to each reader that a key may be found which will open the whole to his understanding.

Still more, perhaps, the fascination which it continues to exercise is due to another cause. At

intervals, all through history, there have been periods of crisis, when the existing order of the world seemed on the verge of collapse. Unable to discover a remedy for the miseries which oppressed them, men have given up the hope of seeing a new order developed through normal agencies, and have cried out for some divine judgment, some obviously miraculous intervention, which should dethrone triumphant wickedness and give the human race a fresh start. When, in such a mood, they turned to the Apocalypse, they recognized there the expression of a mood like their own, which they readily interpreted as a forecast of their troubles and a promise of deliverance. Again and again they were encouraged to pursue the investigation by finding what seemed to be a sure clue in the resemblance which the Beast of the Apocalypse bore to the outstanding tyrant of their own times. The working of this principle will be sufficiently illustrated by a few examples taken from periods of exceptional distress. In the twelfth century the Abbot Joachim of Floris, who stirred all Europe to feverish anxiety by preaching that the Millennium was at hand, identified the Beast with Mohammedanism, and two of his horns with the Emperor Frederick I. and the sixth Saladin. The Reformers of the sixteenth century, who suffered so cruelly at the hands of various popes, found it easy to prove that the Papacy was the Beast. The French Revolution, which sorely tried the faith of all Christians, produced

an individual tyrant whose portrait seemed to have been drawn by the Seer. For years Napoleon was known to Englishmen by no other title; and when he made alliance with the Papacy, men saw a fulfilment of the Vision in which the Scarlet Woman rides upon the Beast. If the lesser upheavals of past centuries suggested such applications of the mysterious book, we cannot wonder that the greatest of all wars, with its intolerable burden of suffering and disillusionment, turned the minds of many men into the same vein of speculation. In England, at least, a number of books were published and largely read which identified the Kaiser Wilhelm with the Beast of the Visions. Writers of this class usually acted on the assumption that the whole Apocalypse must be interpreted as a forecast of European history from the first century to their own time. They spent some learning and much ingenuity upon the task of fitting the facts of history to the visions of the Seer. However well each one was satisfied with his work, the inevitable diversity of their conclusions amply refutes the hypothesis upon which all alike depended.

A less popular principle of interpretation, which has yet claimed many adherents from the time of Origen to the present day, is that which is called spiritual or mystical. Writers of that school do not attempt any consecutive interpretation of the book as a whole, but treat individual visions as symbols of some principle or some institution, according to

their fancy, for purposes of edification. Origen, for instance, thus explains the vision of Rev. xix. 11–16. The heavens were closed to the ignorant. The white horse upon which the Word of God descends through the opened heaven, symbolizes the white light of knowledge which opens the heaven to believers. Augustine, again, tells us that the Heavenly Jerusalem and the Millennium stand for the Christian Church, whose reign of a thousand years upon earth began with the Ascension of our Lord. Plainly there is no limit to such fanciful analogies, which can amuse the imagination but cannot feed the understanding.

Besides these two classes of books there are others which combine the historical and the symbolical in various proportions. Some are the work of serious students, others the speculations of ingenious ignorance. Both alike run their course and are forgotten as fashions change or men's passions take a new direction. The failure which they have shared with all the rest has recently suggested a return to the earlier and sounder method of interpretation which was advocated in the second century by Justin Martyr and others. The most modern, following in the steps of the most ancient scholars, are approaching the problem in a way which may be described in a few lines. They hold that the first six chapters (except vi. 12–17) refer to the period during which the Apocalypse was being gradually composed—*i.e.* to the years which lie

between about A.D. 70 and 96. The convulsions of heaven and earth, described in the last six verses of the sixth chapter, are the conventional introduction to a prophecy of the last things. The rest of the book describes a series of miraculous events, which the Seer expected to open almost immediately and to bring human history to a definite conclusion. The language used in both parts of the book is largely symbolical, and must not be treated as if it were literal. But it indicates clearly enough the main teaching which the author desired to convey —his theology and what may be called his philosophy of history. It is not in his definite predictions, which remain unfulfilled, that the value of his writings consists, but rather in the picture which he gives of the Early Church, in his faith that human history is directed by divine providence, and in his ideals of the life to come.

That modern scholars are able not only to revive, but to advance upon, the sober interpretation of the second century is mainly due to two instruments which have been put into their hands by Dr. Charles. He has rediscovered, published, and interpreted a number of the ancient Jewish apocalypses, which throw a new light upon that of St. John. And his masterly analysis of the language has explained so much about the Seer's modes of thought, and his use of old materials, that the book can be understood and appreciated better than ever before.

CHAPTER II

WHAT IS AN APOCALYPSE?

RECENT discoveries, we have said, present the Book of Revelation in a new aspect. It is not, as our fathers used to suppose, a unique book, owning but an imperfect parallel in the Book of Daniel, but rather the last and greatest of a long series of similar works, which for three centuries had occupied a large part of the place formerly held by the writings of the Hebrew prophets. In order, therefore, to understand St. John, we must study the general character and aims of his predecessors.

First we must ask, What is the difference between prophecy and apocalypse? Any one who has compared the Book of Isaiah with that of Daniel or Revelation must be aware that there is an immense difference; but some reflection is needed before we can say exactly in what it consists. The difference is partly one of proportion. Prophet and seer alike both preach and predict; but while preaching is the main business of the prophet, and his prediction occasional, the seer's preaching is only incidental to his main purpose of prediction. But a more striking difference is to be seen in the character of

their predictions. The great prophets of Israel from Amos to Deutero-Isaiah, were convinced that human history was being guided by God's providence to one great end—the establishment of a Kingdom of God upon earth. To this end, they taught, God sent plenty or dearth to reward obedience and punish sin ; to this end he raised up great men to be champions and rulers of their nations ; to this end he put his word in the mouth of his prophets. Slowly, gradually, and by the use of natural means, he was preparing that happy condition of the world in which Israel would hold the primacy, teaching all nations to worship and serve the true God. While they deplored and denounced the sins of the present, as delaying the desired consummation, they never doubted the ultimate victory of righteousness. " The mills of God," they said in effect, " grind slow, but they grind fine " ; and therefore their faith was not shaken even when the monarchies of Samaria and Jerusalem were destroyed, and the best elements of the nation dispersed in distant captivity. The prophets of the exile, Ezekiel and Deutero-Isaiah, far from losing hope through their experiences, wrote with even more confidence than their predecessors.

The spring of prophetic inspiration gradually dried up. The post-exilic prophets were from the first comparatively feeble, and before the fourth century began their voices were silenced. The mental energy of the people was almost wholly

absorbed in the study of the Law which Ezra had imposed upon them; and what remained found satisfaction in the practical moralities of the Wisdom literature. So for two hundred years or more the Jews endured their manifold misfortunes without such support as only living prophets could give. Then there came a change. In the year 198 B.C. Palestine, which had been a province of Egypt for more than a century, was annexed to the rival empire of Syria. The conquerors at first allowed the Jews the same religious liberty which they had enjoyed as subjects of the Egyptian kings. But Antiochus Epiphanes, the brilliant but tyrannical genius who came to the throne in 175 B.C., ordained that all his subjects should adopt Greek customs and Greek religion. The hideous cruelty with which he enforced that ordinance drove a number of the Jews into open revolt; for they held the Law dearer than life. Their attempt appeared ludicrous, so overwhelming was the power of Syria. Led, however, by the heroic family of the Maccabees, they actually drove Antiochus' armies out of Judæa, and triumphantly restored the worship of Jehovah in the Temple.

When the revolt began, the mood of the Jews was one of sheer desperation. How could their tiny forces hold out against the master of an empire which reached from the Mediterranean to the borders of India? As the two great psalms of the time show—the 74th and 79th—the old confidence

in God's providence, working through the regular channels, no longer sustained them. They could see no help in man, however heroic or inspired. Renouncing all ordinary hopes, they cried out for some direct intervention of the Almighty. Let him bare his arm, and slay the oppressors with his irresistible sword! That appeal found at once an expression and a justification in the anonymous Book of Daniel, which was published some two years after the revolt began. The writer put into the mouth of that legendary hero a series of encouraging predictions, all promising that within a brief space the power of Antiochus should be broken and the Kingdom of God established in Judæa. The lofty eloquence of the author, the picturesque form of his predictions, and the very boldness of his hopes, no doubt inspired the patriots with new confidence, and so contributed to their victory. At any rate his promise was so far fulfilled that, within three years and a half from their first rising, the temple services were restored.

The publication of the Book of Daniel marks an epoch. The genius of the writer had created a new form of literature which answered to the demand of the age. During the next three centuries he found numerous imitators. In quick succession came the several documents which are united in the Book of Enoch,[1] the Testaments of the Twelve

[1] The Book of Enoch includes a number of separate works or fragments, of which the earliest appears to be

Patriarchs, the Book of Jubilees, the Psalms of Solomon, the Assumption of Moses, the Secrets of Enoch, the second Book of Baruch, and the Apocalypse of Ezra.[1] These have survived, and doubtless many others have perished. Differing widely in form and in the details of their teaching, in essence these apocalypses are very much alike: for they all promise that by visibly miraculous means a Kingdom of God shall be set up on earth with Jerusalem for its capital; that mankind shall be judged at a great assize; and that the righteous Jews shall enjoy a new and wonderful life, while their enemies are condemned either to destruction or to endless torment. Yet there is a broad distinction between the earlier and later books. Those which were written before 105 B.C. describe the Kingdom of God on earth as lasting for ever, while the rest all agree that it will continue, only for a limited time. From this difference other important differences follow. In the earlier apocalypses the righteous rise with their earthly bodies to take part in the great assize which is held before the Kingdom is set up. In the later it is only the spirits that rise, sometimes clad in "garments of light and glory"; the judgment of all mankind takes place at the end of the Kingdom's duration; and then a

almost contemporary with the Book of Daniel, the latest and most important to have been written some seventy years later.

[1] Probably composed a few years later than the Book of Revelation.

new world is created in which the souls of the blessed will reign for ever in the presence of God. In several of the later apocalypses, again, the victory over the nations, the judgment of mankind, and the rule of the Kingdom are attributed to a personal Messiah, who is a superhuman being, though not divine; but there is no trace of such a character in the prophecies of the second century.

That these anticipations were widely held by the Jews and the early Christians is plain from St. Paul's references to them in his epistles to the Thessalonians and the Corinthians;[1] for there he takes for granted a scheme of the last things which corresponds closely to those of the later Jewish apocalypses, evidently believing that it was already familiar to his readers. The same assumed familiarity accounts for some features of the Book of Revelation, which would otherwise be puzzling. The Seer does not feel it necessary to explain the *mise en scène* or what may be called the machinery of his visions, because he knew that they would not be strange to his readers, who must often have meditated upon earlier visions of the same kind. His dependence upon his predecessors is manifested not only by the general resemblance in outline which his work bears to theirs, not only by numerous

[1] 1 Thess. iv. 13–18; 2 Thess. i. 6–10; 1 Cor. xv. 22–28, 35–44, 50–53. See H. A. A. Kennedy, *St. Paul's Conception of the Last Things*, pp. 47 *sqq.*, and Glazebrook's *The Letter and The Spirit*, chapter v.

references and direct quotations from them, but also by the way in which he takes for granted the existence of a common stock of ideas.

Another important feature of the Jewish apocalypses requires a separate mention. Isaiah and other great prophets, when they made predictions, rarely indicated any date, and discouraged the impatience of their people to see fulfilment. But the writers of the later age, who were no longer content to trace God's hand in the normal and leisurely processes of history, demanded that the desired vindication of right should be not merely miraculous and final, but also immediate. From the author of the Book of Daniel onward, they all imply that their predictions are to be realized at once. The bearing of that fact upon the interpretation of the Book of Revelation is obvious. It is natural to suppose that one who was so familiar with the words of the earlier writers, and who like them despaired of society's reformation by any normal process, must have shared their belief that the destined supernatural deliverance would suffer no delay.

Against these resemblances must be set a difference which divides John the Seer from all his predecessors. The Jewish apocalypses are all pseudonymous: that is, no one of them bears the name of its real author. Prophecy having been discredited since the Law became recognized as the absolute and final revelation, no contemporary

teacher could get a hearing for what professed to be a new message. The only way to success was to attribute the message to some hero of the long past —to Isaiah, or Moses, or Enoch, or even Adam. That convention seriously affected the form in which any such teaching was delivered. Daniel, for instance, could not reasonably be represented as jumping over several intervening centuries in order to foretell nothing but the success of the Maccabæan revolt. Dramatic propriety required that he should first say something about the events which were to take place between his day and that of the Maccabees. So Nebuchadnezzar's dream begins with the Babylonian Empire and comes by stages to the empires of Alexander and his successors (the feet of iron and clay) ; and it is only when the events of 450 years have been summarized that the real prophecy begins—that which tells of the stone cut out without hands, the kingdom of the saints which is to destroy the Syrian Empire and succeed to its primacy. So the convention became established that an apocalypse must include an outline of world history in the form of a prophecy. But that convention is not observed by the author of the Revelation. He was not under the Law, and therefore was not obliged to shelter himself behind any hero of the past. Writing in his own name, and clearly indicating the date and place of his vision, he had no need to preface his real predictions by a sketch of past history. The exception which is

presented by the sixth chapter is, as we shall see later, only apparent. It is only because he takes the year 70 as the fixed point of his vision that references to the next twenty-five years, though written after the events, had to be dramatically represented as future. So soon as the brief tale of the first four seals has been told—it occupies but eleven verses—he plunges frankly into the great series of coming woes and triumphs whose imminence is emphasized by the thrice-repeated utterance of the divine Revealer, " Behold, I come quickly."

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CHAPTER III

THE AUTHOR OF THE APOCALYPSE

WHO was John the Seer? When and where did he live? And under what conditions did he compose his wonderful book? All that he tells us himself is that he saw the visions in the Isle of Patmos,[1] where he was suffering for his faith as a Christian. Since that island was regularly used as a penal settlement, and contains traces of ancient quarries, we may reasonably suppose that, like many of his brethren, he had been condemned to work in some sort of mines, which was the equivalent of a painful and lingering death. For all other information about him we are dependent partly upon tradition and partly upon the indirect evidence which his book affords.

The Christian writers of the second and third centuries are almost unanimous in saying that the Apocalypse was written during the later years of the Emperor Domitian; that is, between the years A.D. 90 and 96. We can hardly doubt that their statement is substantially correct; for many

[1] The Island of Patmos is some sixty miles south-west of Ephesus.

passages in the book could not have been written at any other time than that of Domitian's great persecution. There are, indeed, also passages which can only be explained as having been composed in the reign of Nero or Vespasian. While some of these were borrowed by the Seer from earlier writers, according to the custom of the age, and adapted to his purpose, others plainly bear the mark of his own hand. Such a variety of dates in one volume is not unnatural. A great book of this kind is not written easily or quickly ; it grows with years, reflecting in its various parts the successive phases of the author's thought, his changing moods, his developing faith. Though when he begins to revise it for publication he may correct some of the older paragraphs in order that they may harmonize with the rest, he is sure to leave some inconsistencies unnoticed. The Book of Jeremiah offers a striking example of such incomplete revision. St. John's revision, probably cut short by his death, has left many sentences which declare their earlier date. They seem to tell us plainly that the Apocalypse, though finally put together at the end of Domitian's reign, records the spiritual experience of a great man during more than twenty years. Moreover, the absolute disorder of the last three chapters, which cannot possibly be ascribed to design, indicates that his work was brought to a sudden close, before he had attempted to arrange the materials which are there heaped together.

Internal evidence, then, confirms the testimony of tradition about the date of the book. We may add that it supports the belief that Ephesus was his home for many years. For in his letters to the churches of Asia,[1] which must have been written soon after the year A.D. 70, he adopts a tone of authority such as implies an acknowledged leadership, and he shows such an acquaintance with their circumstances as cannot have been suddenly acquired. His arrival in the province, therefore, cannot be placed much later than A.D. 60. Allusions in other parts of the book imply that Asia remained his home to the end; and there are features of his style which seem to connect him specially with Ephesus. If we assume that he lived in that neighbourhood for the thirty years or so preceding his imprisonment at Patmos, we shall be able to explain the allusions to times and places which are found in his book.

What of his earlier life? He was certainly not a native of Asia Minor. Here, again, tradition and internal evidence are in accord. Two rival traditions affirm that he was the Apostle St. John, or else another disciple of the Lord who was known to Papias as John the Elder. In either case he must be a Jew of Palestine. The indirect testimony of his writings confirms that opinion about his nationality. Dr. Charles' masterly analysis of the language

[1] By Asia is meant the Roman province of Asia, which included only the western portion of Asia Minor.

of the Apocalypse has thrown a new light upon the life of its author. I will try to sum up in a few lines the results at which Dr. Charles arrives in forty pregnant pages.[1]

The Greek of the Apocalypse is not like that of any other book. The words alone are Greek; the grammar, and the order in which the words are placed, is largely Semitic. When once we have the right idea suggested, we can see that John thought in Hebrew, framed his sentences in Hebrew—often in such verse as the prophets used—and then set down the corresponding Greek words, with little regard to the rules of Greek grammar. Tenses, cases, prepositions, concords, and the articulation of clauses, all go down before the rush of his eager utterance. The result is something like the peculiar dialect which serves for business communications in China, where the Chinaman translates his own sentences word for word into English, without any regard to English idiom or construction. But in spite of these defects, which might seem absolutely fatal, the Seer's style is not merely intelligible, but rises at times to real eloquence. The splendour of the Authorized Version, though it conceals many obvious faults in his language, does him no more than justice on the whole. For, as Dr. Charles has shown, when his halting Greek is retranslated into the Hebrew of his thought, it exhibits the same

[1] *The Revelation of St. John*, in the International Critical Commentary, vol. i. pp. cxvii.–clix.

majestic blend of poetry and rhetoric which is characteristic of the greater prophets.

Plainly, then, the author of the Apocalypse was a Jew who learned a little Greek too late in life to master the grammar. He must therefore have spent his early years in some country where Greek was little known, or not at all. What country so likely as Palestine? In the cities there, no doubt, a little Greek was spoken, just as a little English is spoken to-day; but it was known to few, and to them very imperfectly. The mass of the people read and understood Hebrew, but spoke the kindred dialect of Aramaic.

At first sight this may seem to support the tradition that the Seer was no other than the beloved disciple. It is a tempting fancy. John the Apostle might possibly have remained in Palestine until he was forty years old or more, and then have proceeded to Ephesus with such prestige that he could soon address the churches of Asia in the tone of a master. He might, as one tradition tells, have been a familiar figure there in his old age, and have committed to a disciple some precious memories of his Lord, which took shape in the Gospel which was called after his name. And then, at last, he might have recorded in the Apocalypse the visions of thirty years. But there are two serious obstacles which make it almost impossible to pursue that fancy. One is due to unquestionable dates. No one has suggested that St. John was less

than twenty years old at the time of the crucifixion. In the year 95, therefore, he must have been at least eighty-six years of age. Men who have been writers all their lives may, and sometimes do, produce books at that age. But who can imagine a man writing his first book when he was nearly ninety—and that man a Galilean fisherman? The other obstacle lies in the testimony of Papias, who was bishop of Hierapolis during the first half of the second century, and a considerable author. In one of his lost books, which is quoted by two later writers, he affirmed that John, as well as his brother James, was martyred by the Jews before the fall of Jerusalem. Supported as it is by a good deal of indirect evidence, that statement appears to be decisive. Of course Papias may have been mistaken; but he had better means of knowing the facts than the later writers who speak of the apostle's residence at Ephesus in his old age.

Are we, then, to fall back upon John the Elder? He is once mentioned by Papias as a disciple of the Lord, but not in any connection with Ephesus; and that is really all we know about him. He is too shadowy a figure to support the conjectures which ingenious scholars have based upon his name. All we can say with any degree of confidence is that the author of the Apocalypse was a Jew, bearing one of the commonest of Jewish names, who lived the earlier part of his life in Palestine, and settled later in or near Ephesus, where before the year 70 he was

recognized as a leader by the Christians of the whole province. Though he was almost ignorant of Greek, he was far from being illiterate. For his mind was steeped in the great literature of his own people. Underlining the phrases in his book which are either direct quotations from the Old Testament and the principal apocalypses, or plain allusions to them, I find that I have marked just one line in every four. That fact admits of only one explanation. A kindred soul to Isaiah and Ezekiel, no less than to the authors of Daniel and Enoch, John the Seer found it as natural to express his thoughts in their words as John Bunyan did to tell his wondrous tale in the language of the English Bible.

CHAPTER IV

THE SEER'S WORLD

No one can rightly understand the Book of Revelation who has not a general idea of the world in which the author lived. The two poles of that world, as he conceived it, were Rome and Ephesus; and the condition of both those cities in his day was so completely different from what it is now, that some explanation is necessary for the ordinary reader.

The Roman province of Asia was at that time the richest and most prosperous part of the Roman Empire. It included the whole of the west coast of Asia Minor, and stretched inland for an average of about two hundred miles. The population were mainly Greek, but with a large admixture of Oriental blood which lent a special fervour and vehemence to their temper. Their language, their art, and their religion, were Greek. A fertile soil, a delightful climate, an industrious people, and the good government of the Roman emperors, had made the towns (of which there were said to be five hundred) extremely prosperous. Their wealth and patriotism were exhibited in the splendour of their public buildings, and in their lavish care of the

great temples, inherited from the fourth and third centuries, which were their special pride. The temple of Diana at Ephesus, for example, was accounted one of the world's wonders. The worship of these temples made a strong appeal to the senses. Splendid processions, beautiful music, fragrant incense and a stately ritual, added a glamour to the magnificence of noble architecture and transcendent statuary. Each sacrifice offered by a leading citizen amid such surroundings was followed by a luxurious feast, where wine flowed abundantly and full licence was given for every kind of indulgence. That is why, at Ephesus as at Corinth, it was at once necessary and difficult to prevent Christian converts from polluting themselves with heathen ceremonies. He who refused invitations to sacrificial feasts cut himself off from all his friends who were not Christians; and yet attendance thereat involved a certain compromise with conscience and a risk of falling into open vice. As some of the letters show, in some cities there was a church party which maintained that such compromises were necessary and innocent. To them the Seer applies the name of Nicolaitans, condemning them as followers of Balaam or of Jezebel. Nor is it wonderful that, familiar with the splendid temptations of these luxurious cities, he writes as if he were obsessed with the fear of moral corruption. Yet that same experience bore also a more pleasing fruit. His visions of the heavenly Jerusalem

reflect the glories which he had seen in earthly temples. Surrounded as he had been by wonderful marbles and precious stones, with gold and crystal, he could not abstain from using such materials to build the city of his imagination.

One form of heathen worship only is prominent in the Apocalypse, for its practical importance eclipsed all the rest. No Christian need enter a temple unless he pleased; but the worship of the deified emperors met him everywhere, and was increasingly imposed as a duty upon all citizens. About a century before this time, the city of Pergamum had obtained leave to erect a temple in honour of Rome and Augustus, as a tribute to the benefits which the Pax Romana conferred upon the province. The Roman Senate disliked the idea, and gave permission only as a concession to the Oriental prejudices of their Asiatic subjects. Yet when Augustus died the Senate determined to reckon him among the gods. Other dead emperors received the like promotion in their turn; and that paved the way for the worship of living rulers. Domitian allowed men, even in Rome, to address him as their Lord and their God. Now in Rome, where the living emperor might be seen in all his naked wickedness, men did not take such language seriously. But in the provinces it was otherwise. For them the distant emperor was the source and representative of that strong and orderly government for which they were unceasingly grateful.

They could honestly worship him as the incarnation of the spirit of justice and peace and civilization; for the evil deeds even of the worst emperors hardly affected the provinces at all. More than that, in worshipping the emperor they were joining themselves with other peoples whose national gods were different from their own. A tolerant polytheism could always find a place for a new god. So the Greek, the Syrian, the African, the Gaul, and the Spaniard, could unite in what rapidly came to be the official religion of the whole empire. Of course the motives of those who took the lead were very mixed. Policy, flattery, and personal ambition might enlist men in the ranks of the imperial priesthood. But the multitude were influenced, in part at least, by two creditable feelings—gratitude for the benefits of imperial rule, and a growing sense of the unity of civilized mankind. Nor were the motives of the emperors themselves all bad. They felt themselves to be gratifying a genuine wish of their subjects, and they knew that their great office was the one bond which held the empire together, saving it from the chaos into which it fell in a later age.

For the Christian, however, this worship presented the most serious of all problems. Other gods only claimed the allegiance of particular nations: the deified emperor demanded the homage of all alike. Other gods were worshipped in their own temples, which he need not enter; the image of the

emperor was everywhere, and at any moment some occasion might arise for offering incense before it. Just because, like Christianity itself, the religion of the empire claimed to be universal, it came into direct and inevitable conflict with the church of Christ. That is why the Seer wrote to the Church at Pergamum, the headquarters of Cæsar-worship in Asia, "I know where thou dwellest, even where Satan's throne is." And year by year, after those words were written, as the worship of the emperor became more popular, its high priests grew more powerful, more ambitious, and more intolerant. They played a leading part in the great persecution which Domitian ordered in the year A.D. 93.

The second pole upon which the Seer's world seemed to revolve was the city of Rome, the capital of the empire, the dwelling-place of the emperor, in which all the wealth and power and wickedness of the world were concentrated. That splendid, luxurious and corrupt city was to his age all, and more than all, that Babylon had been to the age of Jeremiah and of Deutero-Isaiah. All those magnificent dirges which great prophets had pronounced over the expected doom of Babylon seemed to him appropriate to the Rome whose foul breath poisoned the world. He laid them all under contribution; but surely he even excelled his models in that picture of the Scarlet Woman riding upon the Beast, which no reader can ever forget.

In that particular passage the Beast stands for

the Roman Empire as a whole. Strange that such a title should be applied to the empire which the provincials almost worshipped for its beneficent influence upon their lives! Except the British Empire of to-day, the Roman Empire is the most wonderful experiment in human society that the world has ever seen. Stretching from Wales to the Euphrates, and from the Rhine and Danube to the Sudan and the Sahara, it embraced all civilized mankind except the distant and almost unknown inhabitants of Parthia and of China. For those who dwelt anywhere in it, except on the extreme border, it appeared to be the whole world. The various peoples which it included were allowed much liberty. They maintained their own religion and their own laws; and they enjoyed a large measure of self-government. Only there was everywhere a Roman governor, who represented the imperial power and secured the needful degree of uniformity in administration. A combination of tact and force made revolt at once needless and hopeless. Owing to this peaceful order, any subject of the empire could travel all the world over, and find himself at home everywhere. But just for the same reason any man who had offended the central power was given up to despair. He could not go into exile; for even if he could pass the frontiers of the empire he would be outside the world as he knew it. There was no escape from the grasp of that mighty hand which could reach every part of the

habitable earth. Now the head which guided that hand had pronounced Christians to be evil-doers; had said in effect that the mere profession of Christianity, like that of piracy, was an offence which constituted men criminals; and had ordered magistrates in all the provinces to treat them as such. How was a Christian prophet likely to describe the imperial power which dealt so with his brethren? It was natural for him to follow the precedent set by the author of the Book of Daniel, who had pictured the successive world-empires in the form of a lion, a bear, a leopard, and a nameless monster unknown to natural history. When John the Seer wrote of the Beast, his readers would at once understand that he meant the world-empire of his own day.

How far was he justified in using such language? He had experience of two short periods of persecution, which burned themselves into the memory of the Christian Church, and influenced its history for the next two hundred years. The first was under Nero in the year A.D. 64, the second under Domitian in the years A.D. 93–96.

The story of Nero's persecution is so well known that I need not do more than recall the main facts. In the year A.D. 64 a fire broke out in Rome, which destroyed a large part of the city. No doubt it presented a magnificent spectacle to those who were safe in the imperial palace on an isolated hill. So the emperor Nero, half artist, half buffoon, and

wholly selfish, cruel, and cynical, not only enjoyed the spectacle, but dressed himself up in his musician's robes, and sang to the music of his harp while his capital was burning. The angry multitude naturally accused him of having caused the fire which he so much enjoyed. They had no evidence, nor is there reason to suppose that he was guilty. But he sheltered himself in the cheapest way by turning their suspicions in another direction. Selecting a body of men who were too obscure to have champions, too unpopular to win sympathy, and too mild to offer armed resistance, he charged them with incendiarism. In such a city false evidence could be procured with ease by one who could pay for it. So a large number of Christians were arrested, tried, and condemned to execution. Their death was so hideous that even the Roman people, who delighted in the organized butchery of the amphitheatre, were sickened with horror. In the imperial gardens numerous crosses were erected, on each of which a Christian man or woman was hung; and at nightfall they were covered with pitch and set on fire, while backward and forward between the rows of flaming sufferers the emperor drove his chariot in a mad parade of triumph.

That was an isolated atrocity, for there was no excuse for repeating it in the provinces. None the less it marks the beginning of an era of persecution. For Nero's successor, Vespasian, while engaged in suppressing the Jewish revolt, had learned to

dislike and fear the Jews, and to distinguish the Christians as something more than a Jewish sect, deserving of special suspicion. He made up his mind, together with his son and successor Titus, that Christianity was incompatible with loyalty to the government. Accordingly, it was soon laid down by decree of the emperors that the mere profession of Christianity was, like brigandage, a crime punishable by death, without any proof of particular offences. But Vespasian and Titus were too busy with other things to organize any persecution. It was reserved for Domitian, Vespasian's younger son, to carry the Flavian policy into effect. He is so prominent in the Apocalypse and in the history of the Church that a few lines must be devoted to his life and character.

Domitian's memory suffers from the fact that all the surviving records of his reign were written by his enemies. Bad as he undoubtedly was, he was not so black as he is usually painted. After a neglected and rather squalid boyhood he found himself suddenly made a prince by his father's elevation to the throne. Ill-educated, ill-mannered, and ill-tempered, though able and ambitious, he was disliked by his father and brother, who kept him in the background, refused him the military commands which he coveted, and yet recognized him as heir to the throne. By his brother's premature death in A.D. 81 Domitian, at the age of thirty, became the master of the world. Arrogant,

cruel, and profligate, he yet possessed some of the qualities of a statesman. He seriously tried to restore the national religion; he made laws which were intended to reform the morals of Rome; and he did much to put the finances of the empire on a better footing. But when he proceeded to improve the organization of the imperial government, he was foiled by the aristocracy, who commanded the Senate. They despised him for his mean birth and unpleasant manners; they claimed that he should restore the powers which they had gradually lost; and yet they were individually so incompetent, so indolent, and so corrupt, that they could not carry out any policy. Domitian replied to their opposition by taking more power into his own hands; and gradually politics resolved themselves into a duel between him and the Senate. Again and again conspiracies were made to assassinate him; and the cruel revenge which he took upon all concerned maddened their friends into fresh attempts. How could he do otherwise than grow more and more solitary, suspicious, and bloodthirsty? Still the government was carried on under the old forms until the year A.D. 93. Then, all at once, there was a change, and Domitian behaved like a wild beast. He made war upon every rich senator, condemning them to death upon the most ridiculous charges, and confiscating their estates. He persecuted the philosophers, whom he suspected of a secret love of freedom, and hatred of himself.

Like the senators, they perished by the sword or by poison. But his worst fury was directed against the Christians. Not merely death, but every kind of torture and indignity, threatened every man and woman who professed the Christian faith. Yet the persecution was not universal. So far as we know, it raged only in Rome and in some parts of Asia Minor, especially the provinces of Asia and Bithynia. For four dreadful years countless victims suffered from all sorts of atrocities; and it was only the death of the tyrant, murdered by his own servants, that restored peace to the Church. It is the blood shed in those four years which reddens the pages of the Apocalypse; it is the victims of Domitian whose cry for vengeance sounds from beneath the altar in heaven.

CHAPTER V

THE REVEALER

If we put aside a few episodes which the author's imperfect revision failed to bring into vital relation with the body of the work, the Apocalypse may best be described as a mystic drama, of which the story is told by one who was privileged to be the sole spectator. There are two stages on which the scenes are alternately presented. One is the broad expanse of earth, from Italy to Palestine. The other is the floor of heaven, which the ancients believed to rest upon the blue vault of the sky. The theme is the unfailing mystery of the conflict between good and evil. At first these forces are shown in a sort of equilibrium. Gradually the tragic tone deepens, and it seems as if, on the lower stage, the victory of evil were complete. But at last the crisis is reached; the heavenly powers meet and confound the triumphant trio (Satan, the Beast, and the false prophet) who seem to command the world; and what we may call the fifth act shows heavenly might and earthly faith united in a bliss which shall have no end.

Like Goethe's *Faust*, this drama may be said to have two prologues, one on earth and one in heaven. The former states the problem, the latter displays the powers by which the problem is to be solved. The prologue on earth, which comprises the first three chapters, is spoken by him who is to act the chief parts throughout. We shall see that whether the scene is laid on earth or in heaven, it is dominated by one or other of the characters which he enacts, and that even when he is not visibly present, he is still the centre round which all the action turns. It will be well, therefore, to begin the interpretation of the drama by trying to understand the Seer's conception of him who pervades it from end to end.

A reader of the Apocalypse who had no previous acquaintance with Christian or Jewish tradition would be completely at a loss to understand how the same person could be described by so many titles and perform so many seemingly inconsistent functions. It would take him long to discover that the Root and Offspring of David, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Lamb that was slain but is alive again, the Lamb with seven horns and seven eyes which sits upon the throne, the Word of God, the Morning Star, the Conquering Messiah who rides a white horse, the bloodstained Reaper of the world's vintage, and the Bridegroom of the Heavenly Jerusalem, are all in fact one; and that one who claims to be the Beginning of creation and its end,

the Redeemer of the faithful, the Guide and Protector of the Church, the Ruler of the world, and the Judge of all mankind; and yet that he is the same Jesus whose testimony is the law of the saints, and for whose faith they are ready to die a martyr's death. Even Christian readers, familiar from childhood with most of the phrases here collected, may well be puzzled to account for what looks like a random aggregation. Where they looked for a picture they find a series of kaleidoscopic changes.

Yet these titles and attributes are not really bestowed at random. There is, in fact, a very definite order observed in their application. The scenes of the drama, we know, are enacted alternately on the heavenly and on the earthly stage; and the Seer, as he watches, appears to be now on one, now on the other. Sometimes when he is in heaven he looks down to see what happens on earth; sometimes a speaker in heaven refers to events below. Through all these changes of scene and thought one rule is observed with surprising exactitude. Whenever the scene lies in heaven, or in the New Jerusalems which are, as it were, an extension of heaven, the Lord is described as the Lamb. Whether he breaks the seals of the book of destiny, or sits on the throne in heaven, or is the Bridegroom of the Church, or the Ruler of the Heavenly Jerusalem, the Lamb is his only name. It has, indeed, a twofold significance. Now he is the Lamb that was slain for the sins of the world,

of whom Isaiah wrote, and now the horned lamb of the Book of Enoch, Leader and Ruler. Or we may express the same thing by saying that he is at once the conquering and the suffering Messiah. There is nothing strange in this; for the Church had accepted that identification long before the vision of Patmos. Only three times is any other title used in heaven. In the fifth chapter, quite in passing, he is called the Root of David and the Lion of the tribe of Judah; and once in the twentieth chapter he is called Christ—that is, Messiah. These exceptions are so slight as scarcely to be noticeable.

When the scene in which he appears, or in connection with which he is mentioned, lies upon earth, his form is always human. Now he is the historic Jesus whose faith and testimonies are the law of the Church. Now he is the risen Christ, whose glorified human form dazzles the eyes of the Seer; the Lord who is always present to aid and guide his faithful ones, and who holds the churches in his hand. As such, he is the faithful witness, the sovereign of the dead as well as the living. Now, again, he is the Messiah of Jewish apocalypse (like unto a son of man), who rides down from the opened heaven on a white horse to do battle with the powers of evil, who reigns on earth for a thousand years in the city of the saints, and judges all those who are alive at his coming. Different as these representations are, they were all familiar to the

Early Church ; and their intimate connection with each other is symbolized by the human form which is common to them all.

We cannot avoid going on to ask the question which has so often been asked before : Does the Seer mean to teach that the divine being who appears as Jesus, as Messiah, as the Lamb, as the Word of God and the Beginning of creation, is in the full sense God ? On the one hand, he is emphatically the Son of God, and like him called the Alpha and Omega, the Holy and True, and he shares the throne of God ; he is, like Wisdom in the Book of Wisdom, the active principle in creation ; and to him is committed the judgment of all living men before the Millennium. On the other hand, he has no part in the final judgment ; in the second or New Jerusalem, though he is named as on the throne, his light seems to fade in the radiance of the Father ; and he is never called God. St. John's language is, in fact, very near to that of St. Paul, who tells the Corinthians that the Lord will subdue the world and reign on earth, and " when all things have been subjected unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subjected to him that did subject all things unto him, that God may be all in all." Both writers seem to follow closely the account which the Book of Enoch gives of the Elect One (Messiah) who is ultimately subordinated to God.[1]

The conclusion seems to be that the Seer had no

[1] See 1 Enoch xlix. 2, 4 ; li. 3 ; lxi. 8–11.

systematic Christology. Inheriting from the Jews a rich, but not very clear, set of Messianic titles, and from the Apostles a faith in the earthly Jesus as the Saviour, and the risen Jesus as the Ruler and Guide of the Church, he places the two conceptions side by side without co-ordinating them. He neither puts the Son of God on an equality with the Father, nor presents him as the manifestation of the Father. In fact, in his book we find the various elements of Catholic theology in solution, but lacking the touch which was to crystallize them into a related whole.

One aspect of the Seer's imagery seems to require explanation. To a modern European there is something almost repellent in some of the pictures which he presents—a horseman with a sword coming out of his mouth, a lamb opening the seals, sitting upon a throne, and listening to hymns of praise. Van Eyck's pictures, far from solving the difficulty, emphasize it. But the ancient Jews were saved by their very limitations from being conscious of such difficulties.

Still more bewildering is the description of "the Beast" in the thirteenth chapter. It combines elements from all the four beasts of Daniel's vision, with the addition that the creature has seven heads. All the various parts are symbols of one or another attribute; but it is impossible to draw a picture of a monster which has seven heads and yet only one mouth. The prohibition of

making images, however salutary as a protection against idolatry, was disastrous to art. While the Greek could give noble expression to his higher thoughts by idealizing the human form, the Jew was limited to symbols. No one who has seen the representations of gods in India and Mexico can doubt that the attempt to represent ideas by symbols tends to make art grotesque. No works of early Jewish art remain to show how far that people used symbols in stone or wood. But their writings tell us that even their visions were deformed by the limitations of their art. Isaiah's seraphim with six wings, so strangely placed,[1] and still more the symbolic monsters of Ezekiel's opening chapter, are obvious examples. Inheriting their tradition, the Seer, and those for whom he wrote in the first instance, could not be aware that to translate metaphors into visible forms is to transgress the rules of plastic art.

[1] It is true that the earliest Greek winged figures have six wings, two to fly with, two on the shoulders, and two on the heels. But Isaiah's " covered his feet " is a regular Hebrew expression for " covered his middle."

CHAPTER VI

THE PROLOGUE ON EARTH

A MESSENGER who landed at Ephesus had a choice between two main roads, one of which led northwards along the coast, the other due east to Laodicea. Following the former, he might pass through Sardis to Pergamum, where he would join the great high road to the south-east, which led through Thyatira, Sardis, and Philadelphia, to Laodicea. From Laodicea he could return by the direct high road to Ephesus, having delivered a letter in each of the seven cities. The churches of these cities were not all either the oldest or the most important in the province of Asia ; but they were so situated that each was the natural rallying point for a group of churches in the neighbouring district. So it may have been an understood thing that a letter addressed to Laodicea, for instance, was intended also for Hierapolis, Colossæ, Apameia, and other neighbouring churches. That being so, a group of letters addressed to the seven churches was in fact a manifesto which would be published throughout the whole province. Addressed to so wide and

intelligent an audience, it forms a worthy introduction to the momentous pronouncements which are to follow.[1]

Each of the letters presents the same critical problem. The bulk of it is devoted to such praise or blame as may naturally be suitable to a church in prosperous times. The blame, which predominates, implies a community which is well-to-do, and maintains only too friendly relations with its heathen neighbours. It is not when a man is daily threatened with death or torture that he is tempted to lukewarmness, or to join his heathen friends in temple feasts, or to follow a Balaam or a Jezebel into sinful indulgence. The temptations of persecuted men are of another kind: either to apostasy, or to uncompromising fierceness of temper, to magnifying scruples, or to an ostentatious challenging of fate. The body of each letter, in fact, suits perfectly well the condition of the churches in the reign of Vespasian, when persecution was as yet unknown in the provinces. They were so far at ease that the Seer felt the need of reminding them that their peace might be broken by the Lord's second advent (ii. 25; iii. 3), which would come without any warning ("as a thief"). And yet each letter ends with a promise, almost in identical terms, of the rewards of martyrdom—"To him that overcometh" (that is the regular phrase for one who bravely endures a martyr's death) "I will give of the

[1] See the text on pp. 158–164.

hidden manna," or words to the same effect. Such language would be appropriate only when addressed to men who were face to face with some dreadful danger, from which they could escape only by apostasy. And the writer of such words seems to have forgotten all about the faults of these churches. He sees before him only heroes who are ready to suffer all for their faith; martyrs to whom he promises crowns of glory.

There is only one way, apparently, of accounting for this contrast between the two parts of each letter. Originally written in a time of quiet, the letters were preserved by their author and used (with other documents of an earlier date) as materials for his book in the last years of Domitian. Naturally he revised them to suit the new circumstances. Besides minor corrections, which need not here be particularized, he added the uniform postscripts referring to the imminent danger of martyrdom which threatened him and his readers alike. We are inclined to ask why the revision did not go further. Why did he leave the record of the earlier state of things so plain? Perhaps the best answer is that others have acted in the same way. Isaiah's different moods are all represented in the prophecies which he left behind him; and they exhibit a similar contrast. So long as the people of Judah were prosperous, the prophet denounced their sin and threatened punishment. But when the armies of Sennacherib overran the country and

threatened Jerusalem he put reproaches aside, and affirmed that God would surely preserve the city which was the home and the hope of true religion. The prophecies which express these two moods remain side by side in his book. Probably St. John, when he acted in the same way, did not quite realize how little his earlier words to the churches harmonized with the later. That he was not a careful reviser is plain from the way in which he has adapted some fragments of Jewish apocalypse, leaving phrases which clearly declare their origin. Yet surely there is a real significance in the combination of the contrasted moods. The Seer has been asking himself what is meant by the Church's failure—a twofold failure, since she has not been true to her Master, and yet she is persecuted and threatened with extinction for His sake. How can this failure be reconciled with God's righteousness and Christ's redemption? The body of each letter suggests the ground for his anxiety; the postscript supplies the first word of the answer. Martyrdom is in truth victory. But the full answer is to be given in the whole series of visions.

Opinions differ as to the question whether the letters to the seven churches were actually sent at the time of writing, or in fact constitute a single document, which was intended as a manifesto to the province. Dr. Charles takes the former view, Professor Ramsay the latter. It is easy to find arguments on either side, but not easy to reach a

positive conclusion. On the whole I am inclined to believe that the nucleus of each letter represents one that was really received by the church in question; and that some characteristic traits have been displaced by the designedly uniform phrases with which they all begin and end. The opening clause of each letter is obviously framed to correspond with the description in the first chapter of the Divine Figure who dictated the several messages. Whereas the tone of the nucleus is prophetic, these phrases have the true apocalyptic ring.

CHAPTER VII

THE PROLOGUE IN HEAVEN [1]

HAVING heard the prologue on earth, as described in his first three chapters, the Seer is suddenly transported to a place where he can hear the prologue in heaven. The first prologue has set forth the problem which the condition of the Church presents; the second is to exhibit the names by which the problem will be solved. The substance of it may be expressed in words very like those which Pippa sings in Browning's poem. Not—

"God's in his heaven, all's right with the world,"

but

"God's in his heaven, and all will be set right in the world."

In the spirit—that is, in a state of trance—John answers the call of an angelic voice, passes through a door in the firmament, and finds himself before the throne of God. We cannot understand what follows unless we form something like a clear picture of the stage upon which these mysteries are enacted. By the Jews, as by other ancient peoples, the sky was regarded as a solid vault which overarched the flat expanse of the earth. In its

[1] See the text on pages 165–167.

surface, they believed, there were literal doors through which one might pass up or down, and literal windows through which those above could see what was happening on the earth below. Through one of these doors John passes up ; through others he is to see various angels descend ; and through the windows he is sometimes to look down upon the movements of mankind. But before we follow his experiences we must have a map of the heaven to which the open door admits him.

The upper surface of the vault which men call the sky is, as it were, the ground of heaven. The Seer stands now upon it and looks round. Immediately in front of him spreads out a glassy sea, the type of those waters which at the creation were placed above the firmament, the antitype of that " molten sea " which was one of the chief ornaments of Solomon's temple. The temple is again recalled by the mention of an altar, which holds a prominent place before his eyes. Gradually we are led to feel that the whole heaven is a vaster and glorified temple, in the holiest place of which (as in Isaiah's vision) stands the throne of God. That throne is the centre round which all persons are grouped and all events revolve. In a semicircle behind the throne and beside it, as in a Roman basilica, are twenty-four lesser thrones, upon which are seated mysterious angelic beings, called elders, clothed in white raiment and wearing golden crowns. Their number suggests that they may be representatives

of the twenty-four courses of priests. As the Christian Church is called a kingdom of priests, they may also be taken to typify the whole body of the faithful. That seems more probable than the rival views, but cannot be taken as certain. However that may be, the function of the elders is plain. Throughout the mystic drama they serve the same purpose as the chorus in a Greek tragedy, interpreting by their words and gestures the thoughts and feelings which are naturally borne in upon the reader or spectator. Still nearer to the throne stand four cherubim,[1] wearing the heads of a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle, like the more complex creatures of Ezekiel's vision. They appear to represent the four cardinal constellations, and the winds which blow from them. At the same time they suggest four main divisions of the animal kingdom. So we may understand that when they chant the hymn of praise which is taken from Isaiah's vision they are offering a Benedicite on behalf of all Nature. Between them and the throne stands "a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes," the symbols of victorious might and omniscience. As we have seen, the

[1] Cherubim best represents the Greek word which is unfortunately translated by "beasts" in A.V., and "living creatures" in R.V. The description given of them, and their actions, leave no doubt that they correspond closely to the cherubim of Ezekiel x. and the seraphim of Isaiah vi. And it will be found, I believe, that the use of the word in the text makes the meaning much clearer.

Lamb is the heavenly title of him who on earth is called Messiah; and though he does not speak the prologue in heaven, he may be said to act it.

In visions, as in our own dreams, the forms of objects are liable to sudden changes, nor can we look for perfect consistency. Accordingly, we hear now and again of a smaller temple in heaven, which contains an ark and also the throne of God, and which is only sometimes open to view. In two passages (vii. 15; xi. 19) the description implies that the throne of God was in the Holy of Holies of this smaller temple, just as in Isaiah's vision. For the moment, apparently, the elders and the cherubim, whose presence would be impossible, have been forgotten. But the inconsistency is not important, and does not prevent the main features of the heavenly stage from remaining constant throughout the series of visions.

When he has looked round upon the heavenly scene, and heard the elders chant a hymn of praise, John's eyes are turned again to him who sits upon the throne. Of this divine figure no description is attempted; only the radiance which issues from him is suggested by the mention of jasper and sardine stone. Yet the figure must have been human, for in his hand he held a roll, sealed with seven seals. (There is no need to explain the nature of the roll, for the book of fate was a familiar object in Jewish apocalypses.[1]) At once it becomes

[1] See 1 Enoch lxxxi. 1 *sqq.*, xciii. 1–3, cvi. 19, cvii. 1.

evident that this roll contains an account of all the events which are destined to come upon the world; and that the seals, which must be opened separately, mark seven stages in the future history of man.

Naturally the Seer is eager for the roll to be opened, for he divines that it contains the solution of the dreadful problems which he has been revolving. He weeps for fear that it will remain closed, but his anxiety is not for long. The Lamb approaches the throne and receives the roll from the right hand of God; and then, amid a chorus of praise and thanksgiving, which begins with the cherubim and the elders, and is taken up by millions of angels and all the dwellers in earth and sea, he prepares to open the first of the seven seals.

So, if we may translate the actions of this prologue into words, the substance of it is this. The key of the enigma is found. For the Almighty has determined all the future, and by his Word reveals it to his prophets. And inasmuch as he is righteous, the issue which we have awaited with trembling must be one of peace.

CHAPTER VIII

THE FIRST SIX SEALS[1]

THE contents of the book of destiny are not to be read, but to be set forth in dramatic action. As each of the first four seals is broken one of the four cherubim cries out, Come! and at the summons a symbolic horseman comes forward and passes on his way down to earth, the minister of fate. The first of these is mounted on a white horse and armed with a bow. Crowned in anticipation of victory, he goes down "conquering and to conquer." Who is he? Of the various answers which have been given I will only mention that which appears most plausible. This horseman, I believe, represents the Parthian King. The Parthian Empire, which for two hundred years had extended from the Euphrates to the Indus, was the only serious rival of Rome. Ever since the disastrous battle of Carrhæ in the year 55 B.C., where Crassus fell and his whole army were either killed or taken prisoners, the mail-clad Parthian cavalry, with their unerring bows, had been a name of terror to the Romans. In the

[1] See the text on pages 168–170.

year A.D. 62, the Parthian King Vologeses made war upon Nero, and won a considerable victory. Again, in the year A.D. 88, the Parthians supported the pretender who claimed to be the emperor Nero himself; but the imperfect records of Domitian's reign leave us in doubt as to the issue of that war. The vision of the white horse might refer to either of these events, most probably to the last: or it might be a prediction of another and greater Parthian victory in the future. How are we to choose between the alternatives? It will be easier to answer that question when the next three seals have been passed in review; for a similiar question arises about each of them also.

The red horse, which next appears, to whose rider is given a great sword, undoubtedly stands for a civil war. Now, after Nero's death there followed two years of civil war, which raged all over Europe. Three phantom emperors were set up,[1] and shed much blood, and were themselves murdered, before Vespasian established himself on the throne of the world. This, however, seems too early an event to be here intended. Perhaps we should rather look to the events of the years 88 and 89. Antonius Saturninus, the governor of Upper Germany, raised a formidable revolt, supported by the German tribe of the Catti. Though Domitian's surprising energy suppressed it in a few months, there is no doubt that many expected Saturninus to succeed; and

[1] Galba, Otho, Vitellius.

the struggle shook the fabric of the empire. Here, again, we have to ask a question. Does the red horse represent one of these actual civil wars, or some future event of the same character ?

The third horseman, riding a black horse, is the personification of famine. The price of bread is to be such, we are told, that a man's normal wages will just pay for his own allowance of bread, and no more. Yet at the same time there is to be abundance of oil and wine. That strange contrast exactly represents what actually happened in the year 92, when Domitian issued an edict that vineyards should be reduced in order that more land might be used for growing corn.

The rider of the pale green horse, which follows the black, is called by the vague name of Death. What sort of death ? Some interpolator attempted to give an answer, but has only caused confusion. It would seem that our author had in mind the Aramaic word מותא, which may mean either death or pestilence, and that when he wrote the Greek θάνατος he was using it in the sense in which our ancestors spoke of the Black Death. Now, there is no record of a great pestilence in Domitian's reign. But famine is so regularly followed by plague that we might almost assume a pestilence in the year which followed the famine.

As each of the first four seals is opened, we are told what event is to follow upon earth, and we see the agent who is commissioned to bring it to pass.

Very different is the action which interprets the fifth seal. There is no cry of summons; but suddenly underneath the great altar there appear the souls of countless martyrs who have been "slain for the word of God"; and they proclaim their sufferings and appeal for vengeance upon their persecutors. So we learn that the famine and pestilence have been followed by a cruel persecution of the Christians. It is a vivid and dramatic way of telling the story. And it avoids an obvious difficulty. For how could the Seer describe a divinely commissioned horseman descending to earth in order to cause a slaughter of the saints?

Seeing how plainly the sequel of the fifth seal corresponds to the great persecution of Domitian's last years, we might suppose that the martyrs who cry from under the altar belong to no other time. But the martyrs of Nero's reign must not be forgotten; for, though few, they attracted universal attention. Some scholars, indeed, believe that the vision refers to them alone. Others, again, denying that any of the visions represent events which were either past or present when the book was written, are obliged to maintain that the outcry of the martyrs is prophetic of something in the future. This conflict of opinion brings up again the same question which arose about the first two seals. No answer will be satisfactory which does not apply to the whole group of five seals. With some

hesitation, I submit the following as the most satisfactory explanation.

The Apocalypse, we have seen, was completed (or rather, its revision was broken off) in the year A.D. 95 or 96. But the visions which it records cannot all be ascribed to that year ; for it is generally agreed that some of them imply an earlier date, and the messages to the seven churches (in their original form) must be placed soon after the fall of Jerusalem. When the Seer grouped them all together so as to make one continuous series, he naturally described the whole as seen in the island of Patmos, where he was at the time of writing. But it seems as if he practically assumed an earlier date—that of the first vision in the reign of Vespasian. (Some commentators have felt so strongly that the earlier date was implied as to place his exile in the reign of Nero.) Is it unlikely that he should thus dramatically antedate his vision ? There is a curious parallel in the history of another seer, which may help us to answer. The decisive moment when Dante saw the vision which determined all his future course, was Easter, 1300. But he spent twenty years in working out the great thoughts which he then conceived in the germ. During those years many events happened which he could not foresee at the first. Some of these were already history when he was writing the *Purgatory*, the second part of his great poem, and he had occasion to mention them. When he did so, he represented

them as being foretold to him by spirits in Purgatory at the time of his visit. That is a dramatic convention, from which he could hardly escape; and it contributes greatly to the unity and impressiveness of his poem.

Now let us try to put ourselves in the place of St. John when he was completing the great drama which (like Dante) he had been meditating for twenty years. He was convinced, as he repeatedly says, that the end of all things was at hand. Now, the traditional apocalyptic scheme, which is quoted in all three Synoptic Gospels, and with which he was obviously familiar, foretold a definite series of events which were to herald the coming of the Son of Man. Foreign wars, civil wars, earthquakes, famine, and persecution, were to be followed by supernatural convulsions in heaven and earth.[1] In the persecutions of the last three years he saw the fulfilment of the fifth part of the traditional forecast. In the Parthian War, the civil wars, the famine of 92, and a pestilence which followed, he recognized something very like a fulfilment of other parts of the same prophecy. Was it not inevitable that he should place all these in the foreground of his own great picture of the future? It was but a foreground; for the main events which he had to draw lay beyond the storm and earthquake which he expected shortly to mark the beginning of the end. As a foreground, who can deny that it serves

[1] See the note at the end of this chapter.

its purpose admirably? Nor must another consideration be neglected. The fixed convention of Jewish apocalypse required each author to put into the mouth of some supposed speaker—Daniel, or Enoch, or Moses—some predictions about the centuries which lay between him and the author's own time. If St. John embodied in his own earlier vision some references to events which had occurred before he wrote the final record, he was making but a small concession to the traditional rules of apocalyptic literature.

I am therefore inclined to believe that the predictions under the first five seals refer to actual events which were future at the time of John's original vision—that is, in the time of Vespasian—but were already past (except the persecution, which was still present) when the book was approaching completion. A confirmation of this opinion may be found, I think, in the marked contrast which we cannot but observe between the visions of the first five seals and all those which follow. The former all represent incidents such as any Hebrew prophet might have foretold, for there is nothing miraculous about them. War, civil strife, famine, pestilence, and persecution, all result from familiar natural causes. On the other hand, when we see mountains are removed and stars fall from heaven, horsemen wear breastplates of fire and brimstone, and ride fire-breathing horses with heads like lions, we know that we are in another world of thought, where

events are miraculous, symbolical, and out of relation to the normal course of history.

Into this wonder-world we are ushered by the last paragraph of the sixth chapter. Yet we are not at once on quite strange ground ; for convulsions in earth and sky, earthquakes, a darkened sun, falling stars, and men's hearts failing them for fear, had long been familiar features of the eschatological landscape. We have found them in Amos, in Ezekiel, in Joel, in the Assumption of Moses, in Baruch, and in some late additions to the book of Isaiah ; and they are mentioned in the Synoptic Gospels as signs immediately preceding the appearance of the Son of Man. The sixth seal, therefore, forms a natural transition between the judgments which belong to the order of history and those which are to characterize the new and supernatural order.

It may be asked whether the description is to be taken literally. Plainly, that cannot be. For if all the mountains had been removed, the kings could not call upon them to cover them ; and many of the disasters foretold in connection with the Woes would be impossible if the sun had been darkened and the surface of the earth changed beyond recognition. The language used is, in fact, conventional, and does not mean more than a series of earthquakes and storms of unusual violence and duration. Their main importance is that they strike terror into the inhabitants of the earth, making them believe that the last day has actually come. But the end

is not yet. The reader of an apocalypse is like the traveller in a mountain country. The nearest mountain seems to touch the sky; but he who climbs to the summit sees another beyond which reachers higher, and as he climbs on finds that he is on a mountain staircase, of which each step seems the last until his foot rests upon it and he sees yet another. So the breaking of the sixth seal, which appeared to promise one great and final event, does no more than open the way to a long series of wonders which rise one above another towards a far distant climax.

The Seer, who appeared to be leading us on to that prospect, suddenly turns back, and points to an event which was to take place on earth before the sixth seal was opened. The angels, he tells us, who control the four evil winds were bidden to check them until the servants of God should have the mark of his seal set upon their foreheads. The meaning of this is obscure; but probably that seal is something like the sign of the cross, which will protect them from the power of the demons who are soon to be let loose upon the world.

Those who are sealed are said to be twelve thousand from each of the tribes of Israel. The interpretation seems to be this. The Church of Christ is the spiritual Israel; and twelve is a mystic number, signifying completeness. Those that are sealed, therefore, are all the living members of the Christian Church.

Some account of the prophetic vision of their martyrdom will be given in a later chapter.

NOTE.—Each of the three Synoptic Gospels ascribes to our Lord a prophecy which consists of two parts: (*a*) a general account of the woes which must herald the coming of the Son of Man, and (*b*) a detailed prediction of the fall of Jerusalem. The view generally accepted by scholars is that (*b*) was written after the event, and that (*a*) is derived from a small Jewish apocalypse, current during the life of our Lord, which he may or may not have quoted. Since the three Gospels record that part of the prophecy in almost exactly the same words, either St. Matthew and St. Luke borrowed from St. Mark, or else all three authors had the same document before them. St. Mark's version, which in either case seems to be nearest to the original, is as follows:—

"When ye hear of wars and rumours of wars, be not troubled: for these things must needs come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there shall be earthquakes in divers places; there shall be famines; these things are the beginnings of travail. But take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in synagogues shall ye be beaten; and before governors and kings shall ye stand for my sake, for a testimony unto them. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved. . . . In those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall be falling from heaven, and the powers that are in the

heavens shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And then shall he send forth the angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of the heaven" (xiii. 7–9, 24, 25). In all three versions the order of events is almost exactly the same: 1. foreign wars; 2. civil wars; 3. earthquakes; 4. famine; 5. persecution; 6. signs in the heaven; 7. the advent.

St. Luke alone adds pestilence, which follows so naturally upon famine: St. Matthew places the famine before the earthquakes.

The story of the seven seals follows the same order with one exception. The earthquakes are united to the signs in heaven as part of the sixth portent, and so room is made for pestilence after famine, without exceeding the mystical number of seven. So the Seer's order is: 1. foreign wars; 2. civil wars; 3. famine; 4. pestilence; 5. persecution; 6. convulsions in heaven and earth; 7. the coming of the Son of Man. That last event, however, is not presented as a single action, but as a long series of actions both in heaven and on earth.

CHAPTER IX

THE SEVENTH SEAL[1]

When the seventh seal is opened there is no immediate action. That which follows is generally felt to be the most dramatic touch in the whole book—"There was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour." The interpretation of that silence is not difficult. Up to this point the record is of normal events, tragic indeed but not without ample precedent in history; and events which, though future at the first moment of vision, are past at the hour of writing. But now all the spectators in heaven feel that a door has been opened through which they approach a long vista of strange and momentous crises, such as have never been known before. They stand still, as it were, and hold their breath while they try to penetrate the meaning of what they dimly divine. It is thus that the Seer marks the boundary between history and prophecy.

That majestic silence is rather emphasized than broken by a single movement. While all else is still, an angel approaches the altar and pours upon

[1] See the text on pages 170–174.

it the incense which lends acceptability to the prayers of the saints below. Silently the smoke carries up the prayers before the throne of God. Not silent is the answer ; for when the mystic half-hour expires, the same angel takes fire from the altar and casts it down upon the earth, as a token that the prayers are heard. Then follow thunders and noises and lightnings and earthquake, fit prelude to the new and awful drama which is about to be enacted.

" Woe, woe, woe, to them that dwell on the earth, because of the voices of the trumpets of the three angels, which are about to sound." Thus solemnly are we introduced to the series of three Woes, which bear a very distinct character. They are not natural disasters, like those of the first five seals, nor simple miracles, like the plagues of the vials, but a mysterious exhibition of demonic influences.[1] Neither are they universal in their effect, but discriminating. The first attacks only the heathen, leaving the Christian unharmed ; the second destroys a third part of mankind ; the third makes war upon the Christians alone. Yet again, they are distinguished by a profusion of detail in the description, such as is not bestowed upon the other plagues. The Seer seems to set them apart

[1] In editing the text I have followed Dr. Charles, who regards the first four trumpets as an interpolation. His reasons, which appear to me convincing, should be read in his own words (vol. i. pp. 218 *sqq.*). It follows that the fifth, sixth, and seventh trumpets become the first, second, and third.

from all these. They are not divine judgments, but a direct manifestation of the power of Satan.

The interpretation of the third woe, as we shall see, is simple enough. But the first and second present difficulties, not the least of which is to decide how far the picturesque details in each description bear a symbolic meaning, and how far they are merely ornamental. For example, the power of the locusts is limited to five months. Is that number significant, or is it named because five months is the normal lifetime of an ordinary locust? It is not hard to decide in favour of the latter view. But about some other details the opinions of scholars are much divided. I propose to put forward what seems to me the more probable view in each case, without any discussion.

The first woe begins with the fall of a star from heaven to earth. In the apocalyptic language a star is another name for an angel; so we are not surprised to learn that this star has been sent on a mission. With the key which has been entrusted to him he opens the pit of the abyss. That term is familiar to the reader of apocalypses. The Greek word abyss (ἄβυσσος) was used to translate the Hebrew tehôm, which appears in the English Bible as "the deep." Tehôm is the name for the primæval ocean which, when earth was created, was confined in a kind of tank beneath the earth's surface, but connected with the sea by shafts (called the fountains of the deep) which could be

opened, as in Noah's time, to cause a flood. In the deep was imprisoned the evil power which is called "the dragon" in Isaiah li. and the 74th Psalm—a power corresponding to the Tiamat of Babylonian legend. But later writers gave a new meaning to the term "abyss." In the Book of Enoch,[2] for instance, it is a vast hollow beneath the earth, which was entered by a shaft or "pit," much like the oubliette of a mediæval castle. This was the fiery prison in which fallen angels were confined until final judgment was pronounced upon them. It was placed under the charge of the archangel Uriel. So perhaps it is Uriel who now opens the prison door in order that a new and strange plague may issue upon the earth.

Immediately there is a rush of smoke from the furnace within; then follow multitudes of locusts. They are locusts only in name; for the writer, taking Joel's description of a plague of locusts for his model, has so exaggerated the prophet's comparison of them to men of war as to make these creatures wholly supernatural. They are like war-horses, but with the faces of men, the hair of women, and the teeth of lions; and they wear crowns upon their heads. Stranger still, in their tails are the stings of scorpions, wherewith they afflict mankind for five months. Not all mankind, however, but only such as have not the seal of God (vii. 3, 4) upon their foreheads. This torment is inflicted

[2] 1 Enoch xviii., xix., xxi., lxvii., xc.

only upon the heathen; the Christians, like the Israelites in Egypt, are immune.

What does it all mean? Plainly the locusts are demons. But how can we interpret the sting which causes acute pain, yet does not kill? Is it some physical torture or some spiritual misery? Mediæval legend has made us familiar with the notion that demons could not face the sign of the cross; and we may well suppose that the same belief was current in the first century. Mediæval demons, again, were credited with power to cause physical pain; indeed it was their chief occupation. Is such the injury which the locusts are to inflict? On the whole that seems most probable, especially since both the second and the third woe are concerned with bodily disease and death.

So the first wave of the Satanic onslaught ends in defeat. Abaddon, Satan's satrap, has been allowed to send his forces to assail the saints, and they have harmed only the heathen who are his own servants. A sore disappointment for Satan! but he has a second and a third wave in reserve.

According to the Book of Enoch, so often quoted by the Seer, Satan had under his rule certain "angels of punishment," who performed duties which seem to us rather inconsistent. They were at once tempters, accusers, and executioners; they were not wholly subject to Satan, but also received orders direct from God himself. Four of these, it appears, were imprisoned on the banks of the Euphrates,

but were ready, when set free, to stir up a vast host and lead them in an attack on Palestine. The idea of a mighty invasion from the East is an old one. Ezekiel devotes two chapters (xxxviii., xxxix.) to a prediction that Gog will come from the land of Magog, leading the Persians and countless other tribes to the assault. In the Book of Enoch we read (lvi. 5, 6): "In those days the angels shall return and hurl themselves to the East upon the Parthians and Medes. They shall stir up the kings so that a spirit of unrest shall come upon them. And they shall go up, and tread under foot the land of his elect ones" (*i.e.* Palestine). A closer parallel still to our passage is found in the Apocalypse of Ezra, a Jewish writing which was almost contemporary: "And a voice was heard: Let these four kings be loosed which are bound beside the great river Euphrates, which shall destroy a third part of mankind. And they were loosed, and there was a great commotion."

The armies mentioned in those earlier books are made up of real men, like the army of the Parthians which followed the horseman of the first seal. But we have now passed into a supernatural world. The army of which we read here numbers two hundred millions; its horsemen wear the colours of fire and brimstone; the horses breathe out fire and smoke and brimstone which destroy a third part of mankind. We are left in doubt upon one point. Are the Christians protected from this plague, as from the

former, by the seal of God on their foreheads? On the whole, I think not. Standing between the first woe, which affects the heathen only, and the third woe, which affects Christians only, the second woe seems to fall impartially upon mankind. Directed by the angels of punishment, it is in some sense a call to repentance; but, like most "visitations" in history, it leaves the survivors even more depraved than before. "And the rest of mankind, which were not killed by these plagues, repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils . . . neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornications, nor of their thefts."

The story of these two woes raises a very serious question. When the Seer draws a picture of all heathendom writhing in an agony from which they vainly try to escape by death, while the Christians enjoy immunity, and again of a third part of mankind choked or consumed by smoke and brimstone and fire, without any resulting benefit to the survivors, we recognize in him the true successor of those later Jewish writers, from Trito-Isaiah to the author of Enoch, in whose conception of God pity had no place; but we cannot fail to ask what is the Christian element in his prophecy. For he represents all these horrors as the firstfruits of those prayers of the saints which an angel offered up with incense upon the heavenly altar. It is a commonplace among commentators on the Apocalypse that

God is there represented rather as the Jehovah of Judaism than as the Heavenly Father of the Gospels. Dr. Swete, for instance, writes: "The God of the Church is the supreme King whose throne is in heaven, the Master and Lord of all; He is the Creator of earth and sea and sky, and of all that is in them, the Judge of mankind, the Avenger of the wrongs that are done on the earth, to be feared and worshipped by all. But of His love no express mention is made, although there is frequent reference to His wrath. He is nowhere represented as the Father of men, even of the righteous: His righteousness and truth are magnified, but there is no proportionate exhibition of His goodness and beneficence." That is, indeed, an understatement. It should be added that the only direct action attributed to him by the Seer is the final judgment which condemns almost the whole of mankind to eternal torment in the lake of fire.

Men's conception of God is reflected in their own spirits and conduct. Accordingly we find the saints and martyrs, though removed from the earth which was the scene of their suffering, and at rest under the heavenly altar, still crying out for vengeance upon their persecutors. A strange and painful contrast to what is recorded in Acts of the first martyr, whose last words were, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." Stephen was less tempted; for he had not lived through a period of cruel persecution, which almost always hardens the

victims' hearts. John had himself suffered; he had witnessed the horrors of Diocletian's rage; he had seen many renounce their faith for fear of torture. And his thought was steeped in the old apocalypses, which may almost be described as one long appeal to the God of vengeance. It was natural that he should share in some degree the feeling which seven hundred years of oppression had burnt into the souls of his nation. We ought to take all this into account when we are repelled by the lurid colouring of certain visions. We can make excuses for himself. But we need not go further, and accept his portrait of the Almighty as having authority. Unhappily the Church has in the past been only too ready to adopt his language and his thought. Again and again, instead of a religion of love, she has preached a religion of fear. By an appeal to the Apocalypse she has been able to impose a narrow asceticism, to justify persecution, and to condemn the greater part of the world to despair.

The third woe is neither more nor less than the appearance and domination of the Beast, which seems to mark the complete triumph of Satan. According to the Seer's custom, the full account of this cardinal event is reserved for later chapters (xiii.–xv.); and here is briefly indicated, not by a narrative, but by a song in heaven which foretells the ultimate victory of the powers of good over Satan and the Beast.

CHAPTER X

THE BEAST [1]

THE vision of a vast heathen world, wholly impenitent, which neither torture nor the fear of death could deter from idolatry and the resultant iniquities, has prepared the way for the third and greatest exhibition of the power of Satan. All the evil which was diffused among millions is now concentrated and personified in a pair of monsters, who by force and by magic arts aim at destroying all the faithful. Now to wear the seal of Christ upon the forehead is to be the target for every weapon.

A parenthetical chapter (xii.), to which we shall return later, has told how Satan (who is the Dragon) had failed in his assaults upon the infant Christ and the primitive Church; and has shown him to us standing upon the seashore in an attitude of expectation. Answering, we must suppose, to his summons, a monster emerges from the sea and takes possession of the land. We recognize it as the last of those four beasts which, in the Book of Daniel, represent four world-empires. That shapeless monster, for which natural history had no name, stood originally

[1] See the text on pp. 174–176.

for the Greek Empire of Alexander, while its ten horns were his successors. But when Rome became dominant in the East, the Jews changed the interpretation. For Jews and Christians alike, in the first century, the fourth beast of Daniel was the Roman Empire. A Jewish apocalyptic writer of about A.D. 71 so represented it, but added to its strangeness by giving it the mouth of the first of Daniel's beasts, the feet of the second, and the body of the third. No doubt he intended thereby to suggest that the new empire was an epitome of all the former oppressions from which the Jews had suffered.

The description of the Beast in our thirteenth chapter obviously follows this tradition, only adding one new feature—that the Beast had seven heads. Not only does the Seer follow tradition, but he actually quotes the words of the writing just mentioned. Strange as it may appear, the thirteenth chapter, the pivot on which the book turns, is not in the main his own composition. The first half (verses 1–10) is quoted, with a few additions and adaptations from one Jewish apocalypse, which described the Roman invasion, the siege of Jerusalem, and the misery of the survivors, under the image of a beast rising from the sea and occupying the land for three and a half years. The second half (verses 11–17) is derived from another Jewish document in which the Antichrist is represented as a false prophet. By means of additions our author has adapted these writings to represent his meaning.

The Beast of the first document still means the Roman Empire, but it becomes also Antichrist; while the Antichrist of the second document becomes a second Beast, standing for the imperial priesthood which directed the worship of the emperors.

Though he has adapted the old writings sufficiently to express his main thought, the Seer has left phrases which are inconsistent with it, and have caused much difficulty. Such is the mention of the tabernacle (*i.e.* the temple at Jerusalem), of the Beast making literal war upon the saints and defeating them, and of the term of three and a half years —a conventional apocalyptic period, which roughly corresponded to the length of the Jewish war. These difficulties, as well as the importance of the thirteenth chapter, make it necessary to give a rather long explanation.

First let us try to fix the locality of the vision. The monster comes up out of the sea, as apocalyptic monsters usually did. In the original document, of course, it was the eastern Mediterranean, from which the Roman armies disembarked at Haifa or Joppa. But the Seer, in adapting the words, has his eyes fixed upon his own province, which was the original home of the Cæsar-worship and the scene of the most cruel persecutions which that worship occasioned. He had often stood on the shore near Ephesus, which was the regular port for Roman fleets, and watched the arrival of

pro-consuls with their splendid trains of followers, or the disembarkation of Roman legions. How naturally the memory of such scenes translated itself into a vision of the Beast, of which pro-consuls and legions were alike the symbols, rising out of the sea to take possession of the land! No less naturally would the native priesthood, who organized and enforced the worship of the emperors, be personified in the figure of a second Beast, springing from the soil to welcome and do homage to the first. It is therefore upon the Ephesian shore that we are to picture Satan as standing, while he summons the Beast; and it is in Ephesus that the magic arts of the second Beast are displayed and his cruelties exercised.

In the strict sense these scenes represent past events. Asia had been subject to Rome for more than two centuries, and the Cæsar-worship was of long standing. But vision is not bound by chronology; and the dramatic effect is vastly enhanced by compressing the long process, which led to the persecutions, into one vivid scene.

The Beast, with attributes drawn from Babylon and Media and Persia, becomes thus the summary and the type of all tyranny, and his minister, the growth of a century, becomes the present incarnation of the idolatry of all time. That partly explains the double aspect under which the second Beast (later called the false prophet) seems to be presented. "He had two horns like a lamb; but

he was a destroyer like the dragon." Perhaps we might paraphrase this by saying, " He represented the culture and fashion of a civilized age, but he could be as ruthless as the Inquisition." The priests of the Imperial cult were leading citizens in their respective cities, high-born, wealthy and much favoured by the Roman government. Yet they were perfectly unscrupulous in forcing the new worship upon the people. They tempted them by splendid shows and festivals ; they deceived them by pretended miracles, bringing fire from heaven and voices from the images ; they coerced those who refused to be cajoled or deceived. Full authority for coercion had been given by a decree of Vespasian ; but it was not seriously exercised until the reign of Domitian.

Like the pictures of the Beasts, the account of the persecution seems to be partly retrospective. Christians had already been put to death by Nero, and a general order had been issued by Vespasian and Titus which would authorize the severest measures. Under Domitian many had been killed, and it was plain that many more were doomed. But the prediction that Christians would be forbidden to buy necessaries in the market is apparently something new ; and the mark to be worn by the servants of the Beast is a parody of the Jewish tephillin (which were worn on the *left* hand and the head), not an ordinance that was ever actually enforced. Probably the Seer did not intend his words to be

taken literally, but to serve as a picturesque expression of the spirit in which the persecution would be conducted. Two verses, which seem to have been mistakenly transposed to the fourteenth chapter (xiv. 12, 13), give the essential part of his forecast in unmistakable language. When he writes, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth," he is plainly expecting that a long series of martyrs will seal their faith with their blood.

Not only does the Seer pronounce a blessing upon the martyrs; he follows them into the heaven and there is a witness of their triumph. Before him, once more, spreads the sea of glass; and round it stand those who have "been victorious over the beast"—that is, who have suffered death unflinchingly—with harps in their hands and chanting a song of praise to God in anticipation of the victory by which the Lamb will bring all nations to obedience and worship.

So ends what may be called the first act of the tragedy. Before we pursue the story we must try to clear up some points about the nature of the monster with seven heads and ten horns. The explanation which an angel gives in the seventeenth chapter must be taken into account; for while it states definitely that the seven heads are seven emperors, it also gives a clue to the puzzle about "the beast which had the wound of the sword and yet lived."

Even without the help of the seventeenth chapter we might know that the seven heads represented emperors; for in the first verse of the thirteenth we read, "On his heads were names of blasphemy." That phrase has a double significance. All the emperors took the title of Augustus, meaning His Majesty; and this was rendered in Greek by Σεβαστός, which was a stronger term, and was properly applied to a god. In Greek inscriptions of Domitian's reign the emperor is described both as Σεβαστός (holy and reverend) and as Θεός (god). Both titles alike, in Jewish ears, sounded blasphemous.

The first seven emperors of Rome, according to the usual reckoning, were Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, Nero, Vespasian and Titus. If we assume, for the reasons already given, that the whole vision is conceived as taking place during Vespasian's reign, the words of xvii. 10 are exactly applicable: "Five of them have fallen, the one is, and the other is not yet come; when he cometh he must continue a short space." Vespasian was on the throne, and Titus, whose reign was very short, was the heir. One of these emperors we are told four times over (xiii. 12, 14; xvii. 8, 11) had been slain by the sword and yet revived; and he was to take his place as eighth on the list. Undoubtedly this emperor was Nero, who died by his own hand in the year 68, but whom the mass of the people firmly believed either to be still alive or to be

destined to live again. In the course of a few years, in fact, two pretenders took advantage of this infatuation, and came forward to claim the throne.

The eighth emperor in reality was Domitian. Various reasons are assigned for his not being mentioned. (1) At the time when the vision is conceived to be seen, Domitian was under a cloud, Titus was little older than he, and it seemed improbable that he would ever succeed to the throne. Or (2), the author adheres very strictly to the mystic number seven, and would not exceed it. Or (3), the Seer may have agreed with those who spoke of Domitian as being in fact a reincarnation of Nero, whom he resembled in several respects. On the whole the last explanation seems the most satisfactory, though it is not free from difficulty.

At any rate the figure of Nero is dominant. It is he whose wound and revival is repeatedly mentioned; it is he whose image was worshipped; and when the number of the Beast is given, it proves to be a cryptogram for NERO CÆSAR.[1] Here is a strange transformation. The Beast in the earlier part of the chapter was the Roman Empire. In the last verse we are told that its number is "the number of a man," and that man Nero. So the empire is identified with a single emperor! How can this be explained? The visions of every apocalypse

[1] The Hebrew letters were used as numerals. The numerical equivalents of the letters in Nero Cæsar (נרון קסר) when added together make 666.

resemble our dreams in one respect. The figures which appear in them have the cloud-like quality of being able, quickly or slowly, to assume new shapes. There are several examples of such change in our book, but none so striking as the transformation of the Beast. At first he is a strange four-footed animal with seven heads, the type of the Roman Empire. Then special attention is drawn to one of the heads, which has the pre-eminence, because it was slain and restored to life. Gradually it becomes the sole centre of interest, and so at last occupies the place of the whole monster.

The strangeness will be diminished if we remember that the distinction between the empire and the emperor seemed much less to a subject in the Roman provinces than it does to us. If Louis XIV. could say "l'État, c'est moi," a Roman emperor could say it in a much fuller sense. Invested with unlimited power, worshipped all the world over as a god, he summed up in his single person all that the empire meant for the provincials. The transition, therefore, from empire to emperor, and even to Nero, was not so very difficult either for the Seer to conceive or for his readers to accept.

CHAPTER XI

THE SEVEN VIALS [1]

THE song of the recent martyrs in heaven, as we have seen, closes the first act of the tragedy of the Beast. It also serves as a transition to the second act, in which the whole situation is to be changed. So far the powers of evil appear to be wholly triumphant upon earth: but now the vials [2] of God's wrath are to be poured down from heaven, and his victorious power manifested.

The second act begins with the opening of that lesser temple, which has already been mentioned.[3] As in Isaiah's vision, "the temple is filled with smoke," which at once veils the presence of God upon his throne in the Holy of Holies, and manifests his power and his wrath. The vials, which are now poured out one by one, divide themselves into two classes. The first five are preparatory: they bring

[1] See the text on pages 177–184.

[2] The word vial is an incorrect translation of the Greek, which means a wide cup, something like a large saucer, used for pouring libations. R.V. renders it "bowl," which is not accurate. It seems better to keep the familiar word vial, which has so many associations.

[3] See Chap. VII. p. 48.

plagues upon mankind in general, analogous to the plagues of Egypt. A murrain torments all men, the sea is turned into blood, the rivers and fountains are turned into blood, mankind are tortured by intense heat from the sun, and darkness envelops the throne of the Beast, and the land of his subjects, bringing with it torments which cause men to gnaw their tongues. Yet for all this, as Pharaoh hardened his heart, so men repent not of their evil deeds.

To us it may seem strange that in a world so entirely possessed by miracle any normal process of mind, such as repentance, can be thought possible. It was not strange, however, to a generation which believed the story of the Egyptian plagues to be literally true. To them these world-wide disasters would seem but the application on a vaster scale of principles already tested in the Exodus. If we would understand the vision of the vials, and judge it fairly, we must wipe out from our memory all that mankind has learned in the last 1800 years about the laws of Nature and the constitution of the Universe; we must put away those higher conceptions of justice, human and divine, which we owe to the developing Christian faith and the human experience of all those centuries; and then we can entertain such visions without any shock to reason or conscience. Then we can recognize their value as symbols, conveying to the mystic certain truths which could not be directly stated. One of these

truths at least we can see plainly: such a triumph of evil as the third woe brought must involve the dissolution of society; and the ruin of a civilization brings with it physical as well as moral disasters.

While the first five vials are at once judgments and warnings, their main purpose is to lead up to the double climax represented by the sixth and seventh. The final catastrophe of human society now takes shape in a pair of colossal disasters. The great city which is the centre of power and of civilization, the throne of the Beast, and the home of his worship, must suffer a dramatic fall. And the armies of unrepentant heathendom, assembled to challenge the powers of heaven, must be annihilated by the conquering Messiah, descending in visible majesty. Then, and not till then, can the Kingdom of God be established upon earth.

The story of these twin cardinal events is twice told. The sixteenth chapter [1] gives a short account of each, on the same scale as the accounts of the first five plagues. Afterwards three whole chapters are devoted to a picturesque narrative, whose vividness has deeply impressed the imagination of readers in every age. The longer and the shorter accounts must be taken together, for they supplement each other. Only by comparing them can we see why the sixth vial, whose action is completed

[1] Rev. xvi. 12–21 (pages 177–179).

last, precedes the seventh. The armies which are assembled at its summons have to sack the city of Rome before they march to the final conflict at Armageddon.

We have observed already how, in the dream-like visions of the Apocalypse, some of the figures melt and re-form in other shapes like the clouds of a sunset sky. The chapters we are now to consider offer further examples of such fantastic change. The city of Rome, the capital of the empire and the mistress of the world, is personified as a woman clothed in purple and precious stones and seated upon a scarlet beast with seven heads. She sustains a double character. On the one hand, she is "the great harlot," the enchantress whose allurements corrupt all the kings of the earth; on the other hand, she is the trader of infinite wealth, whose power of purchase draws merchants and sailors from all parts of the world. These two characters are so naturally allied that few readers are conscious of the transition when one passes into the other. It is otherwise in the case of the beast upon which she is mounted. He is the empire in the first instance, and his heads are seven emperors. Suddenly his whole being is concentrated in one of these heads—the living emperor, who is worshipped all the world over; and then in his place there appears a dead emperor, who is believed to have been restored to life. Finally, by a strange turn of thought, the reincarnate Nero, now the very Beast,

is shown coming from the east, at the head of vast Parthian armies, to invade the empire and burn the capital. At the same time thunder and lightning and earthquakes, and a great hail, contribute to the ruin of the city.

The first account of what happens to the city itself is rather disappointing; for it is but a slight sketch. "The cities of the nation fell; and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath." Obviously a catastrophe of such cardinal importance demands a further treatment. In the next chapter, therefore, the Seer is summoned by an angel in order that he may learn, partly by sight and partly by hearing, the full history of what is called the judgment of the great harlot. Carried away into a wilderness, he sees before him the twin personifications of city and empire in their simplest form. Upon a scarlet-coloured beast, with seven heads and ten horns, sits a woman who is clothed in purple and adorned with pearls and other precious stones. From the golden cup in her hand she drinks the blood of saints and martyrs, together with other intoxicating abominations. And on her forehead is written her mystic name. "Babylon the great, the mother of the harlots and of the abominations of the earth." The woman fades from view for a brief space, while the angel is explaining the symbolism of the Beast [1] (see Chap. X.). Then another

[1] Rev. xvii. 7–18 (page 180).

angel takes up the tale, proclaiming the fall of the great city, which is now imminent :

> Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen,
> and is become the habitation of devils,
> and the hold of every foul spirit,
> and the cage of every unclean and hateful bird.

It is obvious how closely the writer is following the dirge in the Book of Isaiah,[1] which foretold the ruin of the real Babylon :

> Wild beasts of the desert shall lie there ;
> and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures :
> And ostriches shall dwell there,
> And satyrs shall dance there.

Then another voice cries from heaven, warning the faithful to fly from the guilty city, lest they share her doom :

> Come out of her, my people,
> that ye be not partakers of her sins,
> and that ye receive not of her plagues—

Here again we recognize an echo of the Book of Isaiah ; for the prophet of the Exile says to the Jews in Babylon :

> Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence ;
> touch no unclean thing !
> Go ye out from the midst of her ; purify yourselves,
> ye that bear the vessels of Jehovah.

Presently the voice continues :

> Because she saith in her heart,
> "I sit as a queen
> And am no widow
> and shall see no sorrow : "

[1] Isa. xiii.—a prophecy by an unknown writer during the Exile.

Therefore shall her plagues come in one day,
pestilence and mourning and famine;
And she shall be utterly burned with fire;
for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her.

How closely this follows the forty-seventh chapter of Isaiah!

Now, therefore, hear this, voluptuous one,
that sittest so secure,
That sayest in thine heart,
"I and none but me!
I shall not sit as a widow,
nor know the loss of children."
These two shall things come upon thee
in a moment, in one day,
The loss of children and widowhood:
in full measure shall they come upon thee.

In language borrowed from ancient dirges which foretold the ruin of Babylon and Tyre,[1] the same voice goes on to tell how the kings of the earth will lament when they see the smoke of her burning, how the merchants will bemoan the loss of their traffic with her, and how the disappointed mariners will throw dust upon their heads.

Their lament is followed by a symbolic act. A strong angel throws a great millstone into the sea, saying, "Thus shall Babylon be thrown down and disappear for ever."

The series is not yet complete. Moving as their lamentations are, the kings and merchants and mariners have spoken only of the city's external life, as it was known to strangers. It remains for some one to celebrate the ruined inner life of the

[1] Isaiah xxiii. and xlvii.; Ezekiel xxvi. 15–xxviii. 19.

inhabitants; how all activity is paralysed, all music silenced, all natural joys done away. Only the intimate hatred of one who had lived and suffered in a great city could do this; and so it is in his own person that the Seer utters the concluding dirge:

The fruits which thy soul lusted after
are gone from thee;
And all the dainties and the splendours
are perished from thee.
And the voice of the harpers and singers
shall be heard no more in thee;
And the voice of the flute-players and trumpeters
shall be heard no more in thee.
And no craftsman of whatever craft
shall be found any more in thee;
And the voice of the millstone
shall be heard no more in thee;
And the light of the lamp
shall shine no more in thee;
And the voice of the bridegroom and the bride
shall be heard no more in thee.[1]

At last the picture of ruin is complete: and the Seer in exultation turns to the inhabitants of heaven, bidding them share his rejoicing:

Rejoice over her, thou heaven,
And ye saints and ye apostles and ye prophets;
For God hath given judgment [1] in your cause against her.

The answer to his appeal comes without delay. The voices of a mighty multitude are heard in heaven crying, "Hallelujah to the God who has judged the great harlot." The four and twenty elders take up the same strain. And then voices from the altar and the throne itself complete the

[1] Dr. Charles' corrected translation.

circle of praise and triumph (xix. 1–5, with xvi. 5–7).

It seems strange at first that the great event, which occasions all these dirges and songs of triumph, is not directly described. No doubt one reason of the omission is the fact that the fall of a great city was no unusual incident in the ancient world. Nineveh, the queen of Asia, had been sacked and ruined by the Medes and Babylonians. Babylon itself was captured by Cyrus with dramatic suddenness. And both these events had been foretold by Hebrew prophets. To a later prophet, therefore, it was not hard to conceive the ruin of Rome; and he would assume, in following precedent, that it would be the work of an invading army. That our Seer did so is evident from the last seven verses of the seventeenth chapter. "The ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet, but receive power as kings one hour with the beast. These have one mind, and they give their power and authority unto the beast. . . . And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the harlot, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. These shall war against the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them." The ten horns, apparently, are ten satraps of the Parthians, who will lead the Parthian armies to support the revived Nero. First they will sack the city of Rome, and then, returning eastwards, will either

joint with the rest of heathendom in the battle of Armageddon, or suffer a separate defeat by the forces of heaven. Dr. Charles gives reasons for believing that some verses have been lost after xix. 9, in which the fulfilment of that prophecy was recorded. Even if it were not so, the Seer might assume that his readers would take the event for granted.

But why, it may be asked, is there no narrative of the sack of Rome ?

The incidents which marked the sack of a great city were too familar to readers in the first century to require any detailed description. A sure dramatic instinct has led the Seer to take the details for granted, after just hinting at the character of the invading army, and to concentrate attention upon the astonishment and dismay which followed the disaster. Those kings and merchants and mariners do not speak only for themselves. Like the chorus of a Greek tragedy, they express the horror and amazement with which the whole world would surely shudder when the queen of the nations was laid low. Indeed, when there was an actual sack of Rome, when the Goths under Alaric occupied the city, desecrated the churches and temples, outraged the inhabitants, and carried thousands away into captivity, the dirges of these chapters were echoed in every part of the empire.

The series of dirges is followed, rather strangely, by the song of a great multitude, celebrating the marriage of the Lamb, which is soon to take place.

Like some other heavenly songs, it serves as a transition. While the chorus are foretelling the marriage which is to crown the Messiah's triumph, we are to picture the armies which were set in motion by the sixth vial as mustering for the great battle in which that triumph is to be won.

CHAPTER XII

ARMAGEDDON [1]

THE armies of the heathen world,[2] summoned by the three unclean spirits of the sixth vial, have been assembling, and are now marshalled for battle at Armageddon. Where is Armageddon? Happily there is little difficulty in answering that question. In the northern part of Palestine, east of Mount Carmel, stretches a plain of triangular shape, some twenty miles long and ten miles broad at its base toward the east. Its deep, fertile soil, watered by the river Kishon and by streams from the surrounding hills, make it a prize at which every invader is sure to grasp. At the same time its wide, level surface, walled in by mountains on every side, constitute it a natural battle-ground. For through it pass the high roads from Babylon to Egypt, and from the

[1] See the text on pages 185–187.

[2] It is uncertain whether the Parthian armies are included. As they are separately mentioned in xvii. 14, as defeated by the Lamb, and the Lamb comes to Armageddon in a vesture dipped in blood, Dr. Charles thinks we are to suppose that the blood is the mark of a previous battle in which he destroyed them. The difference is not very important.

East to the Mediterranean shore. All travellers and all armies, whether bound for east or west, for north or south, must march across it. That is why the plain of Esdraelon has been called the cockpit of Western Asia. The battles which have been fought there are many and decisive. There Barak defeated Sisera, and Gideon routed the Midianites. There the Philistines beleaguered Saul ere they slew him on Mount Gilboa. There Pharaoh Neco swept away the army with which Josiah tried to check his march against Nineveh. There a Moslem army defeated the Syrian Greeks; there Saladin and the Crusaders encountered again and again; there Napoleon led his army northward in victory and southward in defeat. Now, the pass which is the key to this home of bloody memories leads from the coast, south of Carmel, through the mountains of Samaria, and emerges into the plain at the village of Megiddo—just where Josiah, on that fatal day, waylaid the army of the Egyptian king. How could a Jewish vision of a great battle, upon which the world's welfare hung, be presented on any other scene than the plain of Esdraelon? And what name connected with the plain should be chosen to mark the site rather than that of the hill which looks down upon Megiddo—Har [1] Mageddon? Where, indeed, should the kings of the earth gather together unto the war of the great day of the Lord,

[1] The aspirate, not pronounced in Hebrew, is omitted in the Greek.

if not under that hill which had witnessed so many fateful conflicts? It is there, accordingly, that the Seer assembles them and their armies, under the supreme command of the Beast and the false prophet.

What a picture the narrative calls up before the eyes of one who has visited that historic plain! I can fancy myself once more standing on Mount Tabor and looking down, no longer upon the rich and varied vegetation which marks the garden of Palestine, but upon a vast and motley host of all peoples and nations and languages, resplendent in shining array, confident in their multitudinous might, ordered and inspirited by the magical influence of the monster who "was and is not and is yet to come." And then I can see one of the grimmest and most dramatic contrasts in all literature. An angel, who stands in the sun, cries aloud to all the birds that fly in the heaven, "Come, and gather yourselves together unto the great supper of God; that ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men." Not without reason does he issue that ghastly invitation. For the heaven opens, and the chivalry of heaven, mounted on white horses, descend upon the field of fate. Their leader, whose eyes are flame, and his tongue a sword, and his garments dipped in the blood of former victories, is at once warrior and judge, King of kings, and Lord of lords. Between such combatants how could the issue be

doubtful? There is no need to describe the progress of the battle. The kings and their armies, we read, are slain with the sword of him that sat upon the white horse, and the fowls of the air were filled with their flesh. Theirs is the happier fate. The actual worshippers of the Beast, whose guilt is greater, share the punishment which is reserved for him and for the false prophet. They are taken captive and cast alive into the lake of fire which burneth with brimstone.

One event yet remains to complete the triumph. The dragon—that is, Satan—who has given power to the Beast and the prophet, must share their doom. So an angel comes down with the key of the abyss, bearing a great chain in his hand; he lays hold upon the unresisting fiend, casts him into the fiery prison, shuts the door and seals it fast. There he is to remain a prisoner until a thousand years are past.

CHAPTER XIII

SOME REFLECTIONS

In the chapter which we have just been studying the mystic drama reaches a climax; and after the battle of Armageddon there is a pause. The reader may well take advantage of it to look back and reflect. He has been carried away by the resistless movement of the narrative. Though most of the language was borrowed, though the order of events was not always clear, though the transformations of the chief actor are perplexing, he finds that these minor defects detract little from the fascination of the whole weird story. He recognizes that these chapters must always hold a high place in the ranks of literature. But, while thus reflecting, he is more concerned to estimate their religious value. What will weigh most with him is not imaginative genius or dramatic power, but truth—truth historical, ethical, and spiritual. Therefore he may be expected to ask three questions about these chapters:

(1) Have their predictions been fulfilled, or can they be?

(2) Do they conform to the Christian standard of right and wrong?

(3) What is the spiritual truth which underlies their symbolism ?

1. The answer to the first question is not hard to find. It has gradually become obvious, in the course of our exposition, that the scenes here described mirror events which the Seer expected to take place very shortly. The revival or reincarnation of Nero was to follow immediately upon the death of Titus ; his acceptance as lord of the empire, or its conqueror, and his defeat at Armageddon necessarily belong to the immediate future. Now, these things did not happen soon ; they have not happened yet ; and their happening now is plainly impossible. The centuries which lie between the Seer's day and our own have so changed the conditions of human society, and man's conception of the universe, that the fulfilment of those predictions, in anything like a literal sense, is to us inconceivable. If we face the facts honestly we must confess that, whatever truth may be revealed through the Seer's visions, it is not the truth of history.

2. Secondly, it is asked whether the moral standards, which are taken for granted in the Apocalypse, are in the full sense Christian. Having found the Seer's conception of God to be partly Jewish, we may expect to find some Jewish elements in his moral code. In fact, we do find three such elements.

Before the Exile, Jehovah was regarded as the

God of the nation rather than of the individual. The Exile, as the psalms and the later prophets bear witness, developed a large measure of personal religion, but only within the community. While they welcomed converts, and allowed that such had personal relations with God, the Jews continued to regard all the heathen, not as individual souls, each with its own needs and claims to pity, but as nations which were the enemies of Jehovah and his people, fit objects of indiscriminating condemnation. The Seer, accepting St. Paul's view that the Christian Church was the true Israel, makes it the heir to the Jewish feeling about the heathen. The narrative of the Vials and of Armageddon represents the non-Christian world merely as a number of guilty nations, each of which merits a collective judgment.

The Jews, with many honourable exceptions, divided the human race into two classes—Hebrews, who by right of birth and knowledge were assured of God's favour, and destined to enjoy a new life of bliss; and heathen, for whom there was no prospect in the future but either annihilation or endless torment. The early Christians inherited this disastrous division of men into black and white, sheep and goats, sons of God and sons of the devil. To them it appeared that a man must either be a Christian and for ever blessed, or a heathen without hope of mercy. Even in St. John's Gospel this doctrine appears now and then, though its author contemplates nothing worse than

annihilation for those who are not saved. The writer of the Apocalypse is not so merciful; for he cries, "If any was not found in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire." His influence has done much to obscure the Gospel of hope which Jesus gave to the world.

A third element is the doctrine of predestination which underlies the whole scheme of seals and trumpets and vials. The Old Testament teaches that everything which happens is ordained by Jehovah. It was Jehovah, the historians tell, who hardened Pharaoh's heart, who sent an evil spirit to darken the soul of Saul, and a lying spirit to mislead the prophets whom Ahab trusted. The prophets tell a like tale. Amos wrote, "Shall evil befall a city, and Jehovah hath not done it?" Isaiah of Babylon represents Jehovah as saying, "I make peace and create evil." A prophet in the age of Nehemiah taught the people to pray, "O Lord, why dost thou make us to err from thy ways, and hardenest our hearts from thy fear?" And the Apocalypses of the last two centuries before our era, though intended to stir men up to hope and effort, are essentially fatalistic in form; for they make it appear that all the horrors of human history were fore-ordained by God and foreseen by his prophets.

It must be admitted, then, that, elevated and elevating as much of the Seer's teaching is, he advocates some principles which are no part of the

Christian conception of God's providence and man's duty.

3. There remains the third question. If the Seer's predictions have not been and cannot be fulfilled; if his visions do not teach historical truth; what is the spiritual truth which underlies their symbolism?

The primary use of mystical vision is to exhibit the principles on which the world is governed, and to set forth some of the modes in which they operate. That can only be done by means of examples, and examples cannot be given without the mention of definite times and places. Visions, in fact, must be concrete, because there is no such thing as an abstract picture. A seer's visions, therefore, always wear the appearance of prediction, and the seer himself usually accepts the appearance as true. Yet, after all, the circumstances of time and place are not an essential part of his message. They are symbols, which may be changed while the truth remains.

The visions of the Beast, victorious and defeated, are not merely prophetic but also symbolic. Perhaps they may be interpreted as follows: A long-established order of society, unless constantly renewed by the admission of fresh elements, inevitably becomes corrupt; and the more corrupt it is the more fiercely it opposes the new truths, social, religious, or intellectual, which are claiming recognition. If they are altogether rejected, if no

new leaven is admitted, there comes a time when the old order is maintained by mere force and tradition, visibly at war with the principles upon which the future depends. Such was the case with the Persian Empire in the time of Alexander the Great, of the Syrian Empire in the age of the Maccabees, of the Roman Empire in the reign of Decius, of the Papacy in the days of Luther. Such, in our own day, was the case with the German Empire; for although it was less than a world power, it was the incarnation of the materialism which had corrupted the world. The Beast of the Apocalypse may stand for any or all of these, and for others like them. As he musters his forces at Armageddon, so every gross material civilization sooner or later concentrates its power for the destruction of higher truth or freedom or justice.

The resurrection of the dead Nero, who becomes the most dangerous form of the Beast, is a parable of the same kind. For an old and corrupt order is never so formidable as in a time of reaction. After Constantine's championship of Christianity there came a recrudescence of heathenism which infected the Church with a lasting disease. After the triumphs of the Reformation there came the establishment of the Jesuit order. After the defeat of Germany a double portion of the German spirit may be given to some other nation or league of nations.

Against those parables of fear there is set a

corresponding lesson of hope. It is a revival and enhancement of a beautiful legend about Elisha. When the Syrian armies encircled the city of Dothan, in order to capture him, his young disciple was filled with fear. But when, in answer to the prophet's prayer, his eyes were opened, he saw that the Syrian host was itself surrounded by chariots of fire, the army of the Lord of Hosts, ready at any moment to destroy it. That vision has a thousand parallels in history ; for, as Napoleon himself confessed, spiritual forces in the long run are stronger than those which are material. Again and again, in spite of all human probability, the spiritual forces have prevailed. What chance of victory could any rational forecast assign to the Maccabees ? Who could imagine that the Christian Church, so nearly destroyed by Decius, would in a few years dominate in the Roman Empire ? What hope was there for Luther and his friends, when they defied the Empire and the Papacy combined ? All such paradoxical triumphs are summed up by anticipation in the story of Armageddon. As the Beast and his armies symbolize the corrupt material power which from time to time threatens to enslave mankind, so the Son of Man on his white steed, descending to earth with all the chivalry of heaven, represents the spiritual powers which must in the end prevail—the power of ideas, the power of faith, the power of human brotherhood. In actual history the conflicts between these two forces have

rarely been brief, and not always decisive. That is one reason why the vision of Armageddon has so great a religious value. Concentrating the perennial conflict into one dramatic hour, it stands a deathless symbol of that victory of the spirit which must be won again and again until the Kingdom of God is established upon earth.

CHAPTER XIV

THE NEW JERUSALEMS[1]

EARLY familiarity with the Bible, though for many reasons it is greatly to be desired, is yet an enemy of accurate knowledge. Just because we have read this or that chapter so often before we learned to compare and contrast, we fail in later years to notice peculiarities which could not escape attention in a careful first reading. For example, though we are all familiar with the story of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, not one in a thousand readers has ever noticed that whereas in the thirty-third verse of Numbers xvi. the rebels are all swallowed up in the earth, the thirty-fifth verse tells how 250 of those same rebels were afterwards destroyed on the surface by fire from heaven. Yet so it is; and the explanation is perfectly simple. There were two different stories of their fate, which an ingenious editor has interwoven. The labours of modern scholars have exposed the inconsistency and traced it to its origin.

The Book of Revelation offers a striking example of the same kind. In the last three chapters we

[1] See the text on pages 187–191.

read of two Jerusalems. One is the *heavenly* Jerusalem, which descends to earth after the battle of Armageddon, and becomes the dwelling of the saints and the religious capital of the world. The other, called the *new* Jerusalem, does not appear till heaven and earth have passed away, and all sinners have been cast for ever into the lake of fire; but then it is the abode of God and the saints for ever, the centre of the new heaven and the new earth. The contrast between the two ideal cities is obvious, when once attention is drawn to it; and the more one studies them the more differences one discovers. Yet certain similarities of phrase in the two descriptions—notably that both are seen "coming down out of heaven from God"—together with the order in which the descriptions are placed, have led all the world to assume that the two Jerusalems, the *heavenly* and the *new*, must be identified. It has been reserved for a great modern scholar to point out the inconsistencies which this assumption involves, and to discover the true explanation.

The main cause of the difficulty is the confusion in which the text has been transmitted. The author, it seems, had partially revised his great book as far as the third verse of the twentieth chapter, when death overtook him; but left the rest as a collection of unfinished fragments, whose order was not yet indicated. The disciple into whose hands the manuscript passed arranged the

fragments according to his judgment; but the mistakes which he made have misled nearly all subsequent readers. In particular he identified the two Jerusalems, and thereby obscured a most important part of the Seer's message.

The editor seems to have found two large fragments which were nearly complete. The first extended from xx. 4 to xxi. 8, giving a continuous narrative of events from the imprisonment of Satan to the end of time. The second (xxi. 9–xxii. 2) describes the Heavenly Jerusalem. These two passages are in reality quite consistent; but the order in which they stand makes them appear to contradict each other. For after reading that heaven and earth have passed away, sinners have been judged and banished to the lake of fire, and the saints are reigning for ever in the New Jerusalem, the reader suddenly finds himself gazing at a Jerusalem, which stands on the old earth, surrounded by heathen nations and their kings, who pay tribute though they are not admitted within the gates. An inconsistency so manifest calls for some explanation. That which Dr. Charles has given appears to me in the main quite convincing. In what follows I shall try to state it in a popular form.

The second fragment begins with the words, "And there came unto me one of the seven angels . . . and talked with me, saying, Come hither, and I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife."

This recalls the first words of the seventeenth chapter, "And there came one of the seven angels . . . and talked with me, saying, Come hither; I will show unto thee the judgment of the great harlot." That formula was used to introduce a supplement to the previous narrative. Sketching the story of the Vials in the sixteenth chapter, the Seer had dismissed the fall of Rome in four conventional verses. But such a world-wide calamity demanded serious treatment; and in a supplementary chapter he gave a most moving and dramatic account of the great city's destruction. The use of the same formula in xxi. 9 suggests that here again is a supplement to something which has gone before. Looking back to the nineteenth chapter, we find a passage which obviously requires a supplement. The brief song of "a great multitude" (verses 6–9) which celebrates the approaching marriage of the Lamb, gives no account of his bride. The demand for a description is exactly answered by that story of the Bride descending out of heaven which is one of the most famous episodes in the whole Bible (xxi. 9–xxii. 2, 14, 15, 17). When it was written, the question must have arisen where it should be placed. It might have come appropriately after the song of the multitude; but it would have too long delayed the story of Armageddon. It might have followed the sixth verse of chapter xx., which tells of the millennium; but (as was the case with the supplement concerning the

fall of Babylon) its length was out of proportion to the very brief narrative of that chapter. Not satisfied with either, we may suppose, the author put it aside until the right place should be found. Since the bride is, so to speak, the prize for which the battle of Armageddon is fought, we can hardly doubt that the description of her would ultimately have been placed after the account of Satan's defeat. There, as my readers can see for themselves, the brilliant portrait of the bride makes an admirable contrast with the dark picture of Satan chained and in prison. But the ancient editor was not of this mind, and placed it where it is naturally taken to represent the *New* Jerusalem.

The description is so clear and so familiar that it requires little comment. Only a few points must be noted which bear upon the relation of the *heavenly* to the *new* Jerusalem. Planted upon the site of the sacred city, which Titus had rased to the ground, is a new city of supernatural size and splendour. A cube of 1500 miles, its base would extend far beyond the limits of Palestine, and even of Syria ; and its materials remind us of the fairy palaces erected by genii in the Arabian Nights. Size and materials alike symbolize its vast importance for the whole human race. For it is to be the home of the saints--that is, of all Christians who are alive after Armageddon, together with the martyrs who have part in the first resurrection (xx. 4, 5). Under the direct rule of God and the

Lamb, they are to enjoy its delights and splendours for a thousand years. But others besides the saints are to benefit thereby. It is to be a centre of spiritual illumination for mankind. "The nations are to walk by the light thereof," and to be healed by leaves from the trees of life which grow on the banks of its river. Many of the heathen will be converted (will wash their robes) and enter the city in response to the invitation of the Spirit and the Bride. But none that are unclean may enter; and all are emphatically excluded who practise the characteristic heathen vices.[1] That these form the majority of mankind becomes clear when we read in another page an account of the forces which Satan, released at last from prison, leads to the assault of "the camp of the saints and the beloved city" (xx. 8, 9).

The other main fragment (xx. 4–xxi. 8, together with xxii. 3–5) is so concisely written that it presents some difficulties. Indeed, some phrases would be unintelligible to a reader who had not the above description in his mind. For in two short pages there are accounts of the Millennium, of two resurrections and two judgments, of a world-embracing conflict, and of two ideal cities. It may be worth while, therefore, to present the substance of it in ordinary language, which will be more easily understood.

[1] See xxii. 14, 15, 17. These verses plainly belong to the account of the Heavenly Jerusalem, but have been separated by some accident.

After the defeat and imprisonment of Satan the martyrs are restored to life and, together with the faithful who are still alive, are seated on thrones to receive the judgment which awards them a life of a thousand years as priests of God and of Christ. The reference in verse 9 to "the beloved city" shows that the Heavenly Jerusalem is the scene of their blissful existence. When the thousand years are ended, Satan is unloosed and collects the forces of heathendom (Gog and Magog being typical names) from all parts of the world, and beleaguers the city and the camp of the saints. His army is totally destroyed by fire from heaven, and he himself, together with the Beast and the false prophet, is cast into the lake of fire, where they are to suffer torment for all eternity. Then follows the general resurrection of all mankind. The souls of the good and of the evil are released from their respective places of waiting—the treasuries [1] and Hades—and are "judged according to their works. All those whose names are not found written in the book of life are cast into the lake of fire. The same offenders who when alive were excluded from the *heavenly* Jerusalem are now condemned to that eternal torment "which is the second death."

[1] Instead of "the sea gave up the dead" Dr. Charles reads, "the treasuries gave up the dead." The treasuries was the normal word in Judaism (A.D. 50–100) for the abode of righteous souls. And the sea has (according to this narrative) already ceased to exist. See Charles' *Revelation*, vol. ii. pp. 194–198, 442.

The old heaven and the old earth are now dissolved. A new heaven and a new earth, suited to the new conditions of existence, come into being. And from that heaven to that earth descends the new Jerusalem, which is to be the eternal abode of God and his saints.

The whole of this narrative leads up to the account of the new and eternal Jerusalem, which is the climax. Yet when compared with the description of the other, the heavenly, Jerusalem, it seems not merely brief but jejune. Here are no measurements to indicate an impressive magnitude, no gates of pearl or streets paved with gold, no foundations built of precious stones. The water of life does not flow in the midst, the trees of life do not heal the nations, nor do the kings of the nations bring tribute. Instead of these positive elements of happiness there is but a negative statement: There shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, and there shall be no more curse.

A little reflection will convince us that it must be so. The old earth, of which vast proportions constituted the dignity, and rich materials the ornament, has passed away; and for that which takes its place no human language is adequate. Probably, if he were asked, the Seer would say that the New Jerusalem is part of a spiritual world, and therefore not to be measured with material scales or described in terms of material substances.

Like the resurrection bodies of the saints—their "white robes" or "garments of light and glory"—the world which is their eternal home defies description in the speech of men. Surely his contemporary, the author of the second Book of Baruch, spoke for him also when he wrote:

> They shall behold the world which is now invisible to them,
> And they shall behold the time which is now hidden from them:
> For in the heights of that world shall they dwell,
> And they shall be made equal to the angels,
> And be made equal to the stars,
> And they shall be changed into every form they desire,
> From beauty into loveliness,
> And from light into the splendour of glory (li. 8–10).

Reference was made in the second chapter (pp. 11, 12) to the general correspondence which is found to exist between the apocalypses of the first century B.C. and the fifteenth chapter of the First of Corinthians. We are now in a position to show that the Seer's conception of "the last things" differs but little from that which was accepted both by Jews and by Christians. He seems to come rather nearer to the Jewish teachers than to St. Paul. Like them, he tells that a personal Messiah will establish a temporary kingdom on earth; that when the appointed period has elapsed that kingdom will come to an end; there will be a general resurrection and judgment; and then the eternal order will be established. He agrees with them, too, in implying that there is no resurrection

of the flesh. More important to us is the parallel between him and St. Paul.[1]

We need only mention the main points of St. Paul's description, and the correspondence will be obvious. When the last trump sounds and Christ appears, descending from the heaven, the righteous dead rise in their "spiritual bodies," while the living are transformed into the like fashion. Nothing is said of any conflict, but the Messianic Kingdom begins. Christ reigns on earth, but not unchallenged, for "he must reign until he hath put all enemies under his feet"; and he must abolish the spiritual powers of evil which misled them. As in Rev. xx. 14, the climax of his victory is the destruction of death. The completion of his triumph brings the temporary Messianic Kingdom to an end. Christ will then "deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father." And so "God will be all in all"; that is, the eternal Kingdom of God begins.

We observe that St. Paul ascribes the final victory over evil to the Messiah, and not to fire from heaven. Also that he says nothing of a general resurrection and judgment after that victory, though possibly it may be implied in the abolition of "all rule and all authority and power." Not the least important difference is that, whereas in the Apocalypse the Lamb shares the throne of God in the final kingdom, St. Paul definitely says that

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 23–28, 35–49.

the Son " shall be subjected to him, that God may be all in all."

These comparisons help us to understand what are the truths which the Seer's imagery was intended to convey. Firmly confident in the ultimate triumph of spiritual forces, symbolized by the rider of the white horse (Chap. XIII. p. 100), he yet felt, as his predecessors had felt, that the conditions of earthly life make it inconceivable that a kingdom of God on earth can be other than partial and provisional. Unless it were all-embracing it must provoke reaction and fresh conflict. So long as it was material, it must be incomplete. Only the spiritual can be eternal and all-embracing; and therefore faith and logic alike compel us to claim that there must be a new order of being, such as " eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man " to conceive.

The last three chapters of the Apocalypse comprise, besides the two large fragments which we have been studying, others which present no little difficulty. They have rather the air of jottings, intended to be recast and developed. As they stand in the received text, they yield no clear sense; nor does it seem possible by rearrangement to make them into a consistent whole. In printing the text I have provisionally adopted Dr. Charles' scheme, not because it is entirely satisfactory, but because it groups together the verses which relate to

similar subjects.[1] In the second group we seem to have words which are spoken as an epilogue by the same Lord who spoke the prologue. The third group is John's own commendation of his message. Neither of them adds anything vital to what has been said before. But there is one sentence of four words which claims our attention.

"Behold, I come quickly." By repeating these words thrice as a message from the Lord, John emphasizes his conviction that the fulfilment of his visions is to be looked for, not in the vague future, but immediately. In other words, the Seer was like all the great prophets in this, that he addressed his message, not to a future age, but to the living men of his own time.

[1] The first group of sayings proceed from "him who sitteth upon the throne," and are a message of promise and warning to all men.

CHAPTER XV

INTERPRETATIONS

THE visions of the two Jerusalems, like the visions of the Beast and of Armageddon, inevitably provoke the question, What is their religious value? What do they mean for the reader of to-day? The answer must depend in part upon the interpretation which is given to the book as a whole; and interpretations, as we have seen, are numerous and diverse. The most popular in all ages have been those which found the fulfilment of the visions in a series of the more striking events in the history of the world between the first century and the lifetime of the interpreter, and identified the Beast with the most prominent tyrant of the interpreter's own day. That method has been finally discredited by the avalanche of nonsense which the Great War produced. It is, moreover, inconsistent with the evident belief of the author that all these events were to happen very soon. Not here and there, but all through, the Seer's visions present them as not more than a few years distant. The whole line of the prophecies leads up directly to the thrice-repeated saying, Behold, I come quickly.[1]

[1] The rest of this chapter, except the last paragraph, is reprinted, by permission, from an article of mine in the *Modern Churchman* for January, 1922.

We may therefore rule out what is called the "futurist" interpretation, which assumes that the author had in view a series of events which lie still in the future; and consider the claim of others that the heavenly Jerusalem did come very quickly in the form of the Catholic Church. Dr. Milligan writes: "There are distinct indications in the apocalyptic vision which leave no interpretation possible save one—that the new Jerusalem has come, that it has been in the midst of us for more than eighteen hundred years, that it is now in the midst of us, and that it shall continue to be so wherever its King has those who love and serve Him." Surely he must be a hardened optimist who can read the history of the Churches, or look round upon their present condition, and yet find a fair description of them, or of any one of them, in such words as: "And the city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine upon it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the lamp thereof is the Lamb . . . And there shall in no wise enter into it anything unclean, or he that maketh an abomination and a lie." I confess that such interpretations appear to me to assume that language means nothing, and therefore may be taken to mean anything we please.

If none of these views can be maintained, what is left? If, as seems certain, the predictions of the Seer referred to the immediate future, and were not in any literal sense fulfilled, does that failure deprive them of religious value? What can be the worth

for us of visions, however vivid, and descriptions, however picturesque, which do not correspond to any past events in human history, and which cannot refer to events now future, because the time indicated has long gone by? That depends, surely, upon the nature of the visions; whether they are mere predictions or whether they represent an ideal which has independent worth. Let me quote a familiar example.

Three of the most famous chapters in Isaiah—written, I believe, near the close of the great prophet's life—are what is called Messianic. All alike—the 9th, the 11th and the 32nd—foretell the coming of a descendant of David who shall be king in Jerusalem, and a king so just, so wise, so powerful, that the whole people shall be regenerated. If we interpret the ninth chapter in its natural sense, it was written shortly after the retreat of Sennacherib from Judah, and the child whose birth it celebrates was a son of Hezekiah. It was the child of whom the aged prophet wrote:

> The government shall rest upon his shoulder;
> And his name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor,
> Godlike hero, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
> His dominion shall increase, and of peace there shall be no end.

Neither this prediction, nor the similar ones in the 11th and 32nd chapters, were fulfilled. After a hundred years of decadence, the Hebrew monarchy came to an end, and it never has been and never can be revived in such a form as the prophet imagined, unless the Christian religion should perish.

Are those three famous chapters, then, of no value? He would be a bold man who should say so. For they wrought a revolution in the thought of mankind. They taught Israel, and through Israel all the world, to see the ideal in the future, not (as before) in the past. To look forward instead of backward: to let hope take the place of regret: to adopt progress for a watchword instead of conservation: was not this to change the face of the moral world? Isaiah's prophecy has inspired generation after generation for 2600 years, not because it met with any literal fulfilment, but because, in language which can never lose its power, it proclaimed an ideal, which men have more and more recognized as that which ought to be, that towards which the whole creation moves.

Surely we may say the same about the twin pictures of the heavenly and the new Jerusalem. Allowing for the difference between the language of prophecy and that of apocalypse, can we deny that St. John's visions are essentially a development —larger, grander, and more spiritual—of Isaiah's? The millennium—the reign of Christ on earth with the heavenly Jerusalem for his capital—presents the prophet's picture of the Kingdom of God in a glorified form, enriched by the resurrection of the martyrs and transfigured by the personal presence of its Divine King. Let us compare two short passages, and ask ourselves whether they do not closely correspond.

Isaiah writes :

His dominion shall increase, and of peace there shall be no end,
Upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom,
To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness,
From henceforth and for ever.

And St. John writes :

The glory of the Lord doth lighten the city,
And the lamp thereof is the Lamb.
And the nations shall walk by the light thereof :
And the kings of the earth do bring their glory into it.
And the gates thereof shall not be shut day or night :
And they shall bring the glory and the honour of the nations into it.

Both these prophets, amid many differences, express the same pair of essential thoughts. The ideal for the world is the union of mankind in peace and brotherhood, inspired by common worship and common obedience. And what ought to be, must be ; nay, sooner or later shall be. They looked for it to come very soon, whether in the normal course of history or through some miraculous intervention of divine power. We, trained by the experience of long waiting, have given up trying to fix dates. But we have not given up the visions. Taught alike by the prophets and by the long struggles of mankind, we are increasingly sure that the Kingdom of God is the only satisfying ideal for human society : that nothing less can be the consummation of the marvellous process by which man has been led upward from the humblest origin, and is still being led.

Never was there a time when men so longed for such a consummation! The whole world is astir with aspiration. The socialist, the communist, the anarchist, as well as the Christian supporter of the League of Nations, are trying to find the way to a heavenly Jerusalem, in which (as Isaiah says):

> "The work of righteousness shall be peace,
> And the effect of justice shall be security."

Isaiah believed that God's normal providence would lead mankind to this blessed end. The writers of the apocalypses, despairing of what seemed a long and tortuous road, looked for a short cut by means of miracle. There are men in our time who, because they have no faith in God, seek to hew a short cut for themselves with axe and sword, or to blast it with bombs and dynamite. No doubt a large part of mankind are content with their present condition, or rather acquiesce in it as inevitable. But they are the lower races. All the progressive races, all those upon whom the future depends, widely as their ideals differ, and the means by which they propose to attain them, are as one in looking for a new and better state of human society on earth, which shall secure peace among nations and brotherhood among men. That universal aspiration has never found, and perhaps never will find, a more adequate symbol than the picture of the heavenly Jerusalem.

But the Seer did not expect the heavenly Jerusalem, the Kingdom of God on earth, to be permanent.

He described the gradual gathering of the forces of evil outside its range, which are at last to make an assault under Satan's leadership. In other words, like most of the later Jewish writers of apocalypse, he felt that perfection was not to be attained on earth by men who lived under anything like earthly conditions. Like them he regarded the Kingdom of God as a step—necessary but transient—to such a spiritual kingdom as could alone be conceived to endure for ever. In spite of all their imaginative efforts, they could not picture a perfect society in which birth and death, marrying and giving in marriage, eating and drinking, found regular place. So they fixed a term of years, beyond which the Kingdom of God on earth could not endure; and looked for the ideal in a new world, after the old world had dissolved. Our Lord was in a measure endorsing their forecast when He said that in the Resurrection there would be neither marrying nor giving in marriage, but men would be as the angels of God.

That is the secret of the new Jerusalem, which is so like, and yet so unlike, the heavenly Jerusalem. The latter answers to the earthly hopes of the better part of mankind: the former shows the fulfilment of hopes which cannot be satisfied on earth. As I have pointed out, the description is vague. It has none of the gorgeous detail which adorns the capital of the millennial kingdom. How could it be otherwise? For eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither

have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. So what could we desire more than :

> The presence of God is with men,
> And he shall dwell with them,
> And they shall be his people,
> And he shall be their God.
> And God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes,
> And death shall be no more :
> Neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more :
> Neither shall there be any more curse ?

Do not these words express essential elements of eternal life, so far as we are able to conceive it ? What does it matter, though St. John imagined their fulfilment to be very near at hand ? His vision of the new Jerusalem remains an inspiring symbol of that which surpasses the descriptive power of painter or poet.

And yet, as we reflect upon his description, we find something lacking. We cannot surely believe that to be a perfect state of existence, in which there is no sphere for the mind's activity, nor any provision for the social relations upon which a large part of our happiness depends. That lack seems to have been observed by another and (I venture to say) a greater seer, who died six hundred years ago. At any rate, the lack is supplied by the vision which Dante records as having been granted him at Eastertide in the year 1300. Let me briefly recall part of what he tells us in the *Paradiso*. After exploring the dreadful depths

of hell, he climbed the mount of Purgatory on whose summit lay the earthly Paradise. Thence, led by Beatrice, he passed upward through the crystal spheres which encompass the earth, and in each conversed with saints who were enjoying the various degrees of bliss which are assigned to the spheres' inhabitants. Yet even the heavenly spheres prove not to be the real home of the blessed. That was found when, passing still upward, he reached the mystic "Rose Eternal." The poet bids us imagine a white rose, full blown and almost infinite in size, whose petals, ranged in countless circles round the centre, rise tier above tier further than the eye can reach. Each petal is the seat of a soul in bliss. Patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, matrons and virgins, kings and bishops, and even blessed infants, are all ranged in their appropriate places. Whether they be near or far from each other or from the centre, matters nothing to them ; for in that heavenly sphere distance does not separate, and each soul can converse with every other, of all ages and nations. So they live in a perfect state of social union, each in harmony with all. But even that is not the best feature of their state. In the centre of the mystic rose is a vast lake, a circle of glassy water, whose surface reflects all the petals in glorious light. That light comes down from above, from the Triune Deity whose rays, too dazzling even for the eyes of the redeemed, are tempered to a mellow splendour as they are seen mirrored in the depths of the lake.

Not only for the eye is that glorious light. It is the sign and vehicle of a spiritual illumination, which penetrates every soul, and lends to every mind all the radiance which it is able to receive.

So Dante's vision answers to the cravings which we cannot but feel for the joys of converse and the exercise of intellect. It is a symbol, and a symbol cannot wholly satisfy: but it can inspire. And surely the contemplation of the poet's picture, drawn in words of fire, fills us with thoughts too rich for words, and with feelings too deep for tears.

Has Dante said the last word, or does our own experience, and that of mankind in six hundred years, suggest a demand for anything which neither of the great seers has offered? I think there are yet three aspirations of which our generation are conscious.

One is the hope that the love and friendship which are the salt of this life may be consummated in a perfect communion of soul with soul, where there are no barriers of flesh to divide or to obscure. The Hebrew Seer naturally thought more of the happiness of tribes than of individuals: the great Italian tells us, by the mouth of Cato, that human affections lose their force, and become a colourless memory. But our hearts assure us that "There shall never be one lost good," and that love is the greatest good of all.

A second demand is for active service. To John and to Dante alike the universe appeared a comparatively little thing, comprising only the earth and

the crystal sphere in which sun and stars revolved around it. When human life on our planet was ended, and all souls assigned to their eternal abodes, there would be nothing to do: but duty and joy would be summed up in the beatific vision. We who know the earth to be but a tiny speck in a universe whose bounds no calculation and no fancy can reach, see in its magnitude and variety the objects of ever new knowledge, the sphere of new service, which might fill eternity. So when we try to conceive the fullness of an ideal existence, we cannot but include therein the hope of ceaseless activity and growth and service.

The third demand is not a mere supplement to the Seer's forecast, but a challenge to a part of it. After promising the blessedness of the new Jerusalem to all whose names are written in the book of life, John proceeds to say of the fearful and unbelieving and other sinners that "their part shall be in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." A death, that is, which is a life of endless and hopeless torment. Dante draws no such contrast. Once uplifted to the highest heaven, his thought does not return to that which it has left behind. But we who read his poem cannot forget that all the horrors which glow in the pages of the *Inferno* with so lurid a flame, are in his conception destined to endure for ever. So in the visions of both seers the hope of bliss for the few is linked with the doom of endless misery for the many. Such

indeed was the teaching of the Christian Church as a whole until the last century was well advanced. But we have not so learned Christ. Nay, we should be speaking in the spirit of His teaching if we dared to say: Better no resurrection at all than that the thousands should rise to bliss but the millions to unending torment. God, we believe, is love. And if love is divine, must it not be in the end victorious? And where would be love's victory if countless souls were to remain rebels for ever, hating and hateful, suffering pains which could but aggravate their enmity? Only if love's victory be assured can we give a full assent to St. Paul's affirmation that God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself.

Since Dante wrote, six eventful centuries have enlarged our knowledge of the universe, and elevated our conceptions of Him Who is the Creator and Ruler. Some day a new poet-seer will arise, who can garner the spiritual fruits of modern experience, finding meet symbols to express the dumb yearnings, the timid hopes, the dim visions, which are common to us all, and are a part of our living faith. He that can do this will unite us all more firmly and teach us to forget our differences. In his magic mirror he will show us an eternal world of spirit where time and space are not masters but servants; where personality is not lost or weakened but enhanced by being bound up in the bundle of the Divine life; and where victorious love eradicates every trace of evil, merging the discords of the past in one all-embracing harmony.

CHAPTER XVI

THE FOUR EPISODES [1]

We have followed the mystic drama through to the end. In spite of some difficulties, we have found its action convincing and consecutive. But that is partly because we have omitted three whole chapters and parts of two others (vii. 9–17, x.–xi. 1–13, xii., xiv.). It remains to justify the omission and to give some account of the passages in question.

He who travels through a mountainous country by the regular route sees before him at each stage only the next pass or the next mountain which has to be climbed. His attention being always concentrated by the problem of the moment, he gets no views of the distant goal or of the track which he has left behind. But a guide who knows the country can lead him up a side track now and then, to some height which commands a general view of the route which lies ahead or of the country which he has left behind. Such views, if he has leisure for them, reward his delay with added interest. If we think of the main story of the Apocalypse as such a journey, the bypaths have a parallel in certain episodes

[1] See the text on pp. 193–202.

which seem to interrupt the narrative. Three of them afford glimpses ahead, summarizing either a part or the whole of the action which has yet to come; one opens a strange vista through the long past. They are so difficult in their style and substance that a full treatment is here impossible. Yet they are too important and too characteristic to be passed over. I propose, therefore, in this chapter just to indicate the main features of each, and its bearing upon the drama as a whole, hoping that some readers will be led to study them in one of the standard commentaries.

VII. 9–17. The first half of the seventh chapter describes how the faithful were sealed on their foreheads as a preparation for the trials which were impending. The subsequent narrative shows that the seal, while it protected them from the first woe, made them a mark for the evils of the third. The sealing is thus connected in the Seer's mind with martyrdom. Naturally his thought runs on ahead, not only to their death but to its reward. So he takes the reader up to a height, as it were, from which he may see the bliss which is reserved for "those that overcome"—such is his regular phrase for those who seal their faith with their lives. He sees the martyrs of Domitian's persecution already invested with their spiritual bodies (white robes) waving palms of victory, and singing hymns of praise to God and to the Lamb. For them there is no more sorrow or suffering; they "are before the throne of God,

and serve him day and night"; and the Lamb is their shepherd.

X. 1–XI. 13. We have seen already that John sometimes includes in his book passages from older apocalyptic writings, altering or adding phrases so as to adapt them to his purpose. In the first thirteen verses of chapter eleven scholars recognize portions of two Jewish documents, to both of which the Seer has given a new meaning. The former (verses 1 and 2) was written just before the siege of Jerusalem, promising that the Zealots who had seized the temple should escape destruction. The latter (verses 3–13) is part of a Jewish prophecy that Antichrist would occupy Jerusalem, but would be opposed by Moses (or Enoch) and Elijah, restored to life. He would kill them, but they would be revived and ascend into heaven. An earthquake would destroy half the inhabitants who had been misled, but the rest would repent and return to the Law.

Instead of the Jewish Antichrist we find the Beast; the measuring of the city is made to symbolize the safety of the Christian community; and the *dénouement* becomes the conversion of the Jews to Christianity. But the meaning of the whole is obscure. Perhaps the Seer, while his main thought is given to the action of the imperial power in the province of Asia, is thinking of some similar persecution in Palestine, which would be a part of the third woe.

Though to us it seems obscure, that document was evidently important in the eyes of the Seer, for he wrote the whole of the tenth chapter as an introduction to it. The vision is modelled upon one described by Ezekiel, who took from a divine hand a roll which was "in his mouth as honey for sweetness," but was written within with "lamentations and mourning and woe." When the Seer says, "in my mouth it was sweet as honey, and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter," he seems to be contrasting the pleasure derived from the picturesque imagery of the document with the horrors which were involved in its fulfilment.

XII. The twelfth chapter, like the eleventh, is largely made up of extracts from two Jewish documents, which have been adapted in order to express the Seer's own thoughts. Verses 7–12 are founded upon an ancient account of Satan's fall from heaven, and consequent enmity to mankind. Verses 1–6 and 13–17 give a Jewish form to a story which is common to several heathen mythologies. Babylonian, Persian, Greek and Egyptian legends all tell of a primæval contest between a higher being, on whom the hopes of humanity depend, and a monster representing the powers of evil. The Jewish adaptation seems to have told that a woman of heavenly origin—the personification of the Jewish Church—descended to earth, and was about to give birth to the Messiah, destined to conquer all the nations. At the same time Satan descended,

drawing a third of the angels (stars) in his train, in order to destroy the expected offspring. But the woman took wings and fled into the wilderness, where she remained for three and a half years. Her son was born, and ultimately triumphed. In other words, the Roman invasion of Palestine was destined to fail, and the Messiah would soon appear to establish his kingdom in Jerusalem.

The extreme difficulty of understanding the Seer's combination of the two legends is due to three causes. He has retained some phrases which had a meaning in the original legends but have none in his version. He seems to identify the descent of the dragon, which was voluntary, with the fall of Satan, which was enforced by the arms of Michael and his angels. And by making the martyrs speak in verses 10 and 11 he has brought the fall of Satan out of the prehistoric past into the present. Such being the case it is plainly impossible to offer a complete and consistent version of the vision. All we can do is to give a rough outline of the general meaning. It may be stated thus :—

Having suffered defeat in heaven, Satan sought revenge by injuring mankind. The best hope of mankind was the Messiah who was to be born as a son of Israel. So he concentrated his efforts upon the persecution of Jesus. When Jesus, in spite of the crucifixion, had ascended to heaven, Satan turned his malignity upon the Christian Church, which was now the true Israel. Having failed in his

attempt to destroy the Church, he betook himself to a general persecution of individual Christians (the remnant of her seed).

This episode differs from all the others in one respect. It looks backward instead of forward. The Seer, who is just about to describe Satan's third and greatest effort—the manifestation of the Beast—turns aside in order to show the track by which Satan reached that point. In so doing he is obliged to trace the history of " the accuser " from the beginning. He has so abbreviated the documents from which he quotes that to us they are hardly intelligible. But doubtless the readers whom he had in mind were sufficiently familiar with the tradition to fill up the gaps in thought which we know not how to cross.

XIV. This chapter, like the eleventh, anticipates the more detailed visions which are to come. It may be called an epitome of chapters xv.–xix. Yet it is more than an epitome, for it presents each stage of the coming drama under a special aspect.

The first angel's proclamation (verses 6 and 7) runs parallel to the vision of the first five vials in chapter xvi., but with a difference. They are judgments which fall upon men without warning, and which, though meant to produce repentance, only harden men's hearts. But his voice offers " the everlasting gospel " as an escape from the judgments which, he tells them, are about to fall.

The second angel proclaims the fall of " Babylon

the great," regarded under only one aspect—not as the great trader, but as the headquarters of idolatry. His single sentence (verse 8) summarizes the greater part of xvii. 1–xix. 9.

The third angel (verses 9–20) presents the battle of Armageddon (xix. 11–21) with quite different imagery. The followers of the Beast are described, not as an army, but as a human vintage, whose grapes, when cast into the winepress, overflow the world with blood. The Messiah appears, not as a horseman at the head of an angelic host, but seated alone upon a cloud, sickle in hand; and then, at the bidding of another angel, thrusts in his sickle and gathers the vintage of the earth. The fate of the rebellious heathen is described by another image which contrasts curiously with that of the winepress. For they are to be tormented with fire and brimstone," and " the smoke of their torment goeth up for ever and ever."

So far all is plain. But the first five verses of this chapter are difficult, and have been variously interpreted. I will give only what seems on the whole the most probable interpretation. In chapter vii. we were told how the faithful were sealed, and a large number of them, having been martyred, were seen triumphant before the throne in heaven. These martyrs, whose number is the conventional 144,000, have now followed the Lamb in his victorious descent upon earth, and stand with him upon Mount Zion, awaiting the appearance of

the Heavenly Jerusalem, which is to be their home for a thousand years. And as they wait they hear a new song, which comes down from heaven, and which they alone have the power to learn and to sing. In a strict order of time these five verses should come last, after the "vintage." But the martyrs are, so to speak, independent of time. They are the privileged spectators of the whole series of judgments; and therefore it was natural that they should be mentioned first.

CHAPTER XVII

RESURRECTION AND JUDGMENT [1]

MENTION has been made in the second and fourteenth chapters [2] of the beliefs about resurrection and judgment which the Seer inherited from the writers of earlier apocalypses. But considering the importance of the subject, and the great influence which the Seer's teaching has exercised, readers will probably desire some more general statement. In the barest outline, therefore, I will sketch the history of the two conceptions of resurrection and judgment.

Historically as well as logically these two conceptions are closely connected. When the prophetic hope, that a kingdom of God would develop in Israel through normal agency, gave place to the idea that Jehovah would visibly intervene, destroy the heathen powers, and reign in Jerusalem, the question naturally arose: Who shall bear a part in that kingdom? Is it only the Jews who are living at the time of the catastrophe? Have the saints and heroes of the past no claim? The new belief in a future life which had been growing up

[1] See pp. 190, 191. [2] See pp. 11, 12, 110.

during the third century furnished the authors of Daniel and Enoch [1] with the ground of their answer: "The souls of the righteous Israelites will be reunited to their bodies, and they will share the privileges of the Kingdom." Another question followed: Who are the righteous? There must be some court to decide. So there must be a great assize at which Israelites may be judged. The book of Daniel accordingly tells that the best and the worst alike (martyrs and traitors) will rise with their bodies, the former to enter the Kingdom, the latter to suffer torment in Gehenna. The remainder, we are left to infer, will abide in the torpor of Sheol.

But when this new conception became familiar, and men tried to work it out in detail, it proved unsatisfying. The attempt to picture a Kingdom of God on earth, to imagine Jehovah dwelling among men who continued their normal human life, raised a mist of insoluble problems. And further, it was remembered that the fate of the multitudinous heathen could not be disregarded. After a century of meditation and discussion a scheme came to be generally accepted, which may be outlined as follows. The Messianic Kingdom on earth will be temporary. At its close there will be a general resurrection and judgment of mankind. The old world will be done away, and a new spiritual

[1] Dan. iii. 44, vii. 27, xii. 1–3; 1 Enoch xxv. 3–7, xc. 13–40.

world created, in which the righteous will reign for ever, while the wicked (including all the heathen) will be cast into Sheol, which is now conceived to be a place of torment. The new heaven and earth, being different from the old, offer no place for the human body of flesh and blood, of appetites and growth and decay. The resurrection, therefore, will not mean the restoration of the earthly frame; but the soul will be clothed in a new garment of light or of glory, which is what St. Paul seems to mean by "a spiritual body."

By the middle of the first century before Christ this teaching had found a place in the hymns of the Jewish people. In the "psalms of Solomon" we find that the resurrection of the righteous and the everlasting punishment of the wicked have become commonplaces of religious reflection. No less than four of those psalms conclude with words to this effect:

> Sinners shall perish for ever in the day of the Lord's assize,
> When God visits the earth with his judgment.
> But they that fear the Lord shall find mercy therein,
> And shall live in the mercy of their God;
> And sinners shall perish for eternity.

In the first century of our era it was only the conservative Sadducees who did not accept the new belief in judgment and resurrection. Naturally, however, the popular forms of that belief were various—even more various than those which are found in the apocalypses. Both in the New

Testament and in the records of Rabbinical teaching there is ample evidence to that effect.

Although no Rabbinical writings of the first century survive, some books of a somewhat later date may fairly be taken to represent the views which were current during our Lord's lifetime. Mr. Claude Montefiore has thus summarized them in a recent work : [1] " In the details of their eschatology the Rabbis do not give us much help. The distinctions which they draw between the Messianic Age and the world to come, between the life on a regenerated earth and the life after judgment in heaven, are not always clear. . . . We find in the Rabbinical literature a double strain, just as we find it in the New Testament. According to the first, the dead sleep in their graves till the day of resurrection. According to the second, they enter Paradise or Hell at once. The two strains are never clearly and consistently combined. The resurrection life appears to be conceived as a life with a body and soul, like the present life on earth, though the ' body ' was doubtless supposed by most Rabbis to be other and purer than the body of ' this world.' So far as the two strains can be harmonized with each other, it would seem as if the notion was that the spirit after death lived on by itself, receiving a preliminary dose of either punishment or reward. At the resurrection the body rises, and each spirit is joined to its body, and the person-

[1] *The Old Testament and After*, pp. 410, 417, 418.

ality of reunited body and soul receives its judgment, and remains reunited for ever. . . .

"The classical passage in the tractate *Rosh ha Shanah* distinctly says: 'It was taught in the school of Shammai that in the Judgment Day there would be three classes of men: the completely righteous, the completely wicked, and the in-betweens.' Now, clearly, the great mass of Israelites must belong to class three. Of them it is said, 'They go down into Hell, and howl (through pain) but come up again.' The justifying verse is Zachariah xiii. 9, which clearly shows that the punishment is regarded as purificatory."

In the New Testament it is easy to trace the same two strains of thought. For the sake of clearness let us consider judgment and resurrection separately.

Judgment.—The Synoptic Gospels record few sayings of our Lord on this subject; and in most of these he seems to be using the traditional imagery as a background for his moral teaching, without committing himself to it. In Matthew xxv., for instance, the picture of the Great Assize is used to enforce the duty of active benevolence. In the parable of Dives and Lazarus, which teaches the same duty, he uses the language of the rival tradition, which taught that men were judged at death, and then assigned to bliss or to perdition. Such use of popular language is no more to be pressed than his reference to David as the author

of the Psalms. But we do seem to find the same two strains in what is recorded as his direct teaching. For on the one hand he spoke solemnly of the Coming of the Son of Man, involving a great assize; on the other, when he said to the penitent thief, "This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise," he excluded the prospect of any waiting for judgment. Since the reports of his sayings cannot be verbally exact, we may perhaps assume that the difficulty is due to a misunderstanding by his reporters. May we not believe that St. John's Gospel more accurately represents the Master's mind? There judgment is repeatedly described as running parallel to life; not a future event but an ever-present fact. Such is the thought, for instance, in St. John iii. 19, "This is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light"; and again, in v. 24, "He that heareth my word and believeth him that sent me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life." [1]

The two strains are both distinct in St. Paul's epistles. In the earliest he sums up the religion of his converts thus: "Ye turned unto God from idols, to serve a living and true God, and *to wait for his Son from heaven*" (1 Thess. i. 10). The context shows that this implies the Great Assize. But in Colossians, which is almost the latest of his

[1] For further examples see Charles' *Eschatology*, pp. 423–425.

epistles, he seems to teach that judgment is passed during life. " For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory " (Col. iii. 2).

The author of the Apocalypse accepts both the traditional conceptions of judgment, but applies them in different cases. The souls of the martyrs, who perished in the great persecution, are represented as having gone straight to heaven, where (after an interval) they are invested with spiritual bodies (vi. 9–11). For them there is no question of sharing in a general judgment ; for soon they are seen in attendance upon the Lamb with palms in their hands (vii. 10). They are privileged to share in the first resurrection, and to " reign " in the Heavenly Jerusalem. But their case is exceptional. All other human souls must appear before the great white throne, to have their fate assigned to them. The faithful are rewarded by the Almighty Judge with eternal bliss, while the vast mass of mankind are condemned to the lake of fire, where they will burn for ever.

Resurrection.—Definite references to the resurrection are rare in the Gospels. The most important are contained in St. Mark xii. 18–27, and the parallel passages of St. Matthew and St. Luke. When the Sadducees asked their question about the woman who had seven husbands, they doubtless had in mind the popular belief that resurrection meant

the restoration of the material body. Jesus in His answer put that aside as out of the question: "When they shall rise they . . . are as the angels in heaven." He assumes that the resurrection body is a "spiritual body." The same conception is carried further in the verses which follow. The words, "I am the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob," He says, are a proof of the resurrection, since "God is not the God of the dead but of the living." That is a sound argument only if resurrection is understood to mean the continuance of life after death, without the earthly body;[1] for there is here no question of the patriarchs having been restored to their bodies of flesh. We are compelled, therefore, to suppose our Lord's words to mean that the patriarchs, either as pure spirits or invested with the spiritual body, were continuing their conscious life in the other world, like Dives and Lazarus in the parable. That helps us to understand a number of sayings in St. John's Gospel, which represent the resurrection as an event in the present life; *e.g.* "He that heareth my word . . . *hath* eternal life," and "Whosoever liveth, and believeth in me, *shall never die.*"

St. Paul's epistles show the apostle beginning with the popular Jewish view and gradually attaining a conception like that of his Master. In writing to the Thessalonians he accepts the earlier apoca-

[1] The Hebrew word which in R.V. is rendered "rise" also means stand fast, or persist.

lyptic teaching that a resurrection of the just will take place at the coming of the Son of Man—every soul being reunited with its earthly body. In 1 Cor. xv. he tells of a general resurrection, but with a "spiritual body." In 2 Cor. v. he looks for the spirit to be "clothed" at death with a body which has been prepared for him in heaven ("a house not made with hands"). In Philippians he expresses his confidence that for him to die is at once to be with Christ. The last two passages correspond closely with what the Fourth Gospel presents as the teaching of our Lord himself.

The author of the Apocalypse seems to oscillate between the two conceptions of resurrection which were current. Like several of the earlier and of contemporary writers, he denotes the resurrection body by "white robes," which evidently means something ethereal, quite different from flesh. Such bodies are given to the martyrs who are seen under the altar in heaven (vi. 11), and are worn in heaven by the 144,000 martyrs in the seventh chapter. These martyrs, in the fourteenth chapter, are seen standing with the Lamb on Mount Zion, in a way which would suggest material bodies, if we had not a parallel passage in 4 Ezra ii., which describes how Esdras saw "upon Mount Zion a great multitude," of whom the angel said, "These be they that have put off the mortal clothing and put on the immortal." The Seer, in fact, makes

no clear distinction between the " mortal clothing " (to use Esdras' phrase) and the immortal. For it appears from the twenty-first chapter that the martyrs who share " the first resurrection " live in the Heavenly Jerusalem side by side with ordinary men, receive tribute from the nations around, admit converts to join their ranks, and are finally attacked with mortal weapons by the armies of heathen which Satan leads against them. Here is a confusion of thought like that which Mr. Montefiore detects in the sayings of the Rabbis. Neither is it made clear what is to happen after the Millennium is past and the final victory won. We have assumed that the privileged martyrs, having been judged already, are exempt from the Great Assize. But what of the rest? All the millions of the human race are to appear before the " great white throne," coming straight from " the treasuries," or from Sheol, where their souls have been confined since their death. With what bodies will they come? Since, as we have seen, the last chapters of the book are unfinished, it is natural to suppose that this question would have found an answer. Being left to conjecture, we can only follow the guidance of the earlier apocalypses. The earth having passed away, it would seem that there is no place for a material body. But on the analogy of the Book of Daniel we may picture the righteous souls being clad in white robes like those of the martyrs, while the vast multitude of the condemned receive

some kind of body so that their sufferings in the lake of fire may be complete.

The conception of the last judgment, which was generally held in the dark ages and the middle ages, went even beyond what I have supposed. Confused by the "two strains" of tradition, the popular mind seized upon such passages as suggested a striking and materialistic picture. Combining the judgment scene in Matthew xxv. with that of Revelation xix., and holding to the literal resurrection of the flesh, men adopted a conception which is fairly represented by Michael Angelo's *Last Judgment*, and Luther's terrible hymn. But the prospect thus offered was so dreadful as to require some alleviation. The Mediæval Church, pondering over the problems which it raised, found a partial solution—a way of mercy based in part upon scattered hints in early writers, and in part upon the teaching of Plato. For saints and martyrs, it was held, death, judgment, resurrection and ascension might form one continuous path which brought them immediately to the abodes of bliss. But ordinary sin-stained mortals, however sincere their faith, could not endure a change so sudden and so tremendous. Either they must be condemned to perdition, or they must be purified by a long process. Suffering must prepare for glory. That is the ground and essence of the doctrine of Purgatory. Let us think of that doctrine, not in the degraded form which has been infinitely mischievous,

but in its noblest expression. The Mount of Purgatory, as Dante draws it, is one of the most illuminating symbols that ever man's thought created. That upward path of penitence, encircling the mystic mountain, which faithful souls tread with such eager patience, hastening (as one of them says) "to drink the sweet wormwood of the torments," is surely the counterpart of a spiritual reality. Our hearts tell us that there must be some path of purification which will bring us at last prepared into the Divine Presence. The vision of the great Italian prophet and mystic is as a mirror wherein we see reflected our own aspirations. From the summit of the purgatorial mount, where the poet found the earthly Paradise, in which happy souls, their purification accomplished, rest awhile before their final ascent to heaven, let us look back over the path which Dante has traversed in his vision. Where is the judgment seat, and the great court of assize? Virgil, his guide and instructor, did not point them out, nor even mention their existence. Why not? Surely because on that path judgment needs no seat, but proceeds side by side with purification. At the passage from each circle to the next an angel removes from the sinner's forehead one of the marks of his sin, and so pronounces him purged of that offence. When he attains the summit his face, freed from all stains, betokens a soul which is pardoned as well as purified. Dante does indeed, as an obedient son of the Church,

do lip-service to the doctrine of that Last Judgment which was painted on the walls of many a church and proclaimed from every pulpit.[1] But in reality there is no place for such an event in his scheme of the last things. Like modern geologists, he has replaced the catastrophic by the continuous. Nor was he regarded as a heretic. He put aside one half of the Church's teaching; but it was in order to emphasize and enhance the nobler half. The Church accepted his picture, although when he called the "Mystic Rose" eternal he implied that it was not the symbol of an intermediate state but of that which is final.

If St. Paul and St. John, Dante and many another prophet, while not denying the traditional doctrine of a material resurrection and a catastrophic judgment, put their real faith in a conception of resurrection as spiritual, and judgment as providential and continuous, can we wonder that an increasing number of Christians in our day are following in their steps? Modern Churchmen, at least, have no hesitation in so doing; and that is one reason why they desire a revision of our formularies. Our prayer-book, our hymns, our "articles of belief," imply the material resurrection, the great assize, the sudden consignment of every man to endless and unchanging happiness or misery. That conception may claim the support of Scripture and of Church tradition. But based no less upon

[1] See, especially, *Paradiso*, xiv. 34–60.

Scripture, reinforced by the teaching of saints and philosophers, and by the unconscious witness of the Catholic Church, is the other conception, which presents the resurrection as individual and spiritual, the judgment as gradual, and the world beyond the grave as a sphere of growth and of hope. We have inherited both these conceptions, but with a difference. One is inscribed in our formularies, the other is engraved upon our hearts.

CHAPTER XVIII

VISION AND INSPIRATION

THERE is one question which every reader must ask, sooner or later, about John the Seer and his predecessors. What do they mean when they say that they "saw" such and such a vision? The word "see" is even more frequent in their writings than the word "hear" is in those of the prophets; and both alike are used to describe modes of inspiration. Each message of Amos or Isaiah is prefaced by words which imply that God had spoken to the prophet and told him what to say. Yet few now suppose that, in general, the prophets refer to any sound affecting the outward ear. Rather the impulse which moved them took shape in an inward voice: and often their speech uttered a conviction which they believed to be God-given, even though the inward voice was lacking. The preface "Thus saith the Lord" may therefore be said to represent three forms of what is essentially the same inspiration—an outward voice which they seemed to hear, the inward voice which so often moved them, and the conviction which was the fruit of earnest medita-

tion. In the last case the use of the phrase : " Thus saith the Lord," may be called a convention : but it has a real relation to the more literal use. If we regard the inspiration of the prophets as a reality, we must be prepared to recognize it under all three forms.

May we use similar language about the visions which are recorded in so many books ? That men do see visions few would be bold enough to deny. The causes which produce them are very various. Some are the product of diseases, such as epilepsy and some forms of ophthalmia. St. Jerome has left it on record that, as a consequence of his excessive fasts, he saw countless evil sights in his anchorite's cave. The very existence of the word " visionary " warns us how dangerous it is to trust in such appearances. Yet when all allowance has been made for the various forms of delusion, is there not something real that remains ? Is there any reason why the spiritual experiences, which in the case of one mystic translate themselves into an impression of sound, should not in another case take the form of something which affects the eyes ? The Hebrews, like many other nations, regarded dream, vision, and trance as normal channels of inspiration. May it not be urged in partial justification that some men are so constituted that their highest and deepest thoughts naturally take shape, not in words, but in visible forms ? Surely Isaiah's account of the way in which he received his commission as a prophet

carries conviction to every reader. We recognize, of course, that his picture of Jehovah sitting enthroned in the temple is a translation into form and colour of something which is essentially indescribable. But we also recognize that behind it there lies a very real and vivid spiritual experience. Unless we reject the evidence of the great mystics all through the ages, we must allow that the vision of the seer, no less than the lyric ode of the prophet, may be the symbolic expression of a truth which the soul has felt in an hour of exaltation—has felt dimly indeed, but deeply and truly. Such a symbol has a strange power. For a man who looks upon it in the right mood, it seems to translate itself back into the spiritual experience out of which it came; so that he understands, though he cannot articulate, the meaning which lies behind. That is what we do when we study a portrait by a great artist. Gradually the canvas gives us the artist's whole conception of the man he was painting; so that, without any formulation in words, we judge his character and value.

However real, in this sense, some visions may be, we have only to study the Hebrew prophets to understand how easily "vision" may become a literary convention. Ezekiel's elaborate description of the symbolic monsters which were the ministers of his call fails to convince us. And when we come to Zechariah's olive trees which feed lamps, and coloured horses which traverse various quarters of

the earth, we cannot doubt that we are in the region, not of genuine vision, but of allegory. When we turn to the apocalypses of the second and first centuries B.C. we find that the circumstances of their composition require most of their visions to be of the conventional type. In the Book of Daniel, for instance, about nine-tenths of the dreams and visions refer to events which were already past when the author wrote. They are, as much as any allegory, literary compositions modelled upon a traditional form. In the Book of Enoch and some others there is a larger element of real prediction, and therefore it is open to us to assume a larger element of what may be distinguished as genuine vision. But no one can read much of the apocalyptic literature without feeling that the writers were very closely bound by conventions.

One reason for this deserves special notice. The recorded visions, such as Isaiah's or St. Paul's or St. Francis', which are generally accepted as quite convincing, were isolated incidents, cardinal in the lives of those who "saw" them. But an apocalypse offers a continuous narrative which includes a whole series of visions. The author of such a book does not merely record separate experiences, however vivid. He arranges them in order; he connects them by narrative; he gives something in the way of interpretation; and all this involves the use of reason and reflection. Not only so, but, as we have seen in the case of St. John, the Seer feels

quite free to borrow passages from the writings of other seers, and to adapt them for his own purpose. In such a case "I saw" becomes a purely conventional expression. We may perhaps compare the dramatic arrangement of materials so different in quality—some visions actually seen, some borrowed, and some freely composed—to a modern war film, of which some parts are photographed in the field, while other parts are taken from actors who rehearse an imagined scene. Different parts have different values; yet all contribute in some measure to the effect of the whole.

Once more we may with advantage refer to the work of the great Italian poet and seer. At Eastertide in the year 1300, Dante, the mystic, saw a vision of heaven and hell which occupied his thoughts for the rest of his life. He set himself to present it to the world in the form of narrative. In that narrative he included masses of traditional matter, including the geography of heaven and hell and purgatory; he added thereto conceptions and deductions of his own; he enriched it with the poetry of Virgil and the philosophy of Aquinas; he threw back into it, by a dramatic convention, his own spiritual experiences of the twenty years which followed the vision. Yet the result is a harmonious whole, so completely one that no one dare say what parts belong to the first actual impression, and what are developments due to reason, reflection, or constructive imagination. Through all the forms in

which it is manifested the unity of the poet's inspiration remains unbroken.

Like Dante, John the Seer had a message to give mankind about the things which matter most—about the issue of the perennial conflict between good and evil, about the world of spirit, and about him who rules both worlds alike. Conscious of a prophet's inspiration, like Isaiah and Dante, he saw his thoughts take visible shape before him. Just as Dante took Virgil's *Æneid* for a model, so John followed the literary tradition of the Book of Enoch. Like Dante, again, he drew materials from current conceptions, from ancient literature, and even from prehistoric legend, building them all into the structure of his own conception, and stamping them with the character of his own genius. So his work achieves a large measure of unity. Though in the strict sense his "I saw" had a variety of meanings—from actual vision to the adaptation of an old document—it expresses a real connection which unites all the elements of his wonderful book. Seen or foreseen, invented or borrowed, his visions are correlated and consecrated by those moments of mystic ecstasy in which, we cannot doubt, like Isaiah, he received his mission and his message.

THE REVELATION
OF
ST. JOHN THE DIVINE

THE PREFACE

1 THE Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto
2 his servant John: who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, *even* of all things that he saw.
3 Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.

John's commission.

4 John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which
5 are before his throne; and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the *sovereign* of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and *loosed* us from our sins *by* his own blood,
6 and hath made us *a kingdom of* priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and
7 dominion for ever and ever. Amen. Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.

Greeting to readers.

THE PROLOGUE ON EARTH

The seer.

9 I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, *because of* the word of God, and *because of* the testimony of Jesus Christ.

The vision.

10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a
11 trumpet, saying, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto
12 Laodicea. And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I
13 saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto *a son* of man,[1] clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps
14 with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool;[2] and his eyes
15 were as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto *burnished* brass, as if *refined* in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of
16 many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun *shining* in his
17 strength. And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying, Fear not; I am the first

[1] Dan. vii. 13.
[2] Dan. vii. 9; x. 5, 6.

18 and the last: I am he that liveth, and was
dead: and, behold, I am alive for ever-
more; and have the keys of hell and of
19 death. Write the things which thou hast
seen, and the things which are, and the
20 things which shall be hereafter. *As for* the
mystery of the seven stars which thou
sawest in my right hand, and the seven
golden candlesticks: the seven stars are
the angels of the seven churches: and the
seven candlesticks are the seven churches.

THE LETTERS TO THE CHURCHES

2 Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus Ephesus.
write; These things saith he that holdeth
the seven stars in his right hand, who
walketh in the midst of the seven golden
2 candlesticks; I know thy works, and thy
labour, and thy patience, and how thou
canst not bear them which are evil: and
thou hast tried them which say they are
apostles, and are not, and hast found them
3 liars: and hast borne, and hast patience,
and for my name's sake hast laboured, and
4 hast not fainted. Nevertheless I have
somewhat against thee, because thou hast
5 left thy first love. Remember therefore
from whence thou art fallen, and repent,
and do the first works; or else I will come
unto thee, and will remove thy candlestick
6 out of his place, except thou repent. But
this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds
of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate.

7 He that hath an ear, let him hear what
the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him
that overcometh will I give to eat of the
tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

Smyrna. 8 And unto the angel of the church in
Smyrna write; These things saith the first
and the last, which was dead, and is alive;
9 I know thy tribulation and poverty, (but
thou art rich) and the blasphemy of them
which say they are Jews, and are not, but
10 are *a* synagogue of Satan. Fear none of
those things which thou shalt suffer: behold,
the devil shall cast some of you into prison,
that ye may be tried, and have tribulation
ten days.

Be thou faithful unto death, and I will
11 give thee *the* crown of life. He that hath an
ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto
the churches; He that overcometh shall not
be hurt of the second death.

Pergamos. 12 And to the angel of the church in Pergamos
write; These things saith he which hath the
13 sharp sword with two edges; I know where
thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is:
and thou holdest fast my name, and hast
not denied *the* faith, even in those days
wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr,
who was slain among you, where Satan
14 dwelleth. But I have a few things against
thee, because thou hast there them that
hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught
Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the
children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed
15 unto idols, and to commit fornication. So

hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate.
16 Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.
17 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.
18 And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira. Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass;
19 I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the
20 first. Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat
21 things sacrificed unto idols. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she
22 repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they
23 repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every
24 one of you according to your works. But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira,

as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other
25 burden. But that which ye have already hold fast till I come.
26 And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power
27 over the nations: and he shall *break* them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as
28 I received of my Father. And I will give
29 him the morning star. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Sardis. **3** And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name
2 that thou livest, and art dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found
3 thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and
16. 15 heard, and hold fast, and repent. Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he
3. 3 walk naked, and they see his shame. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.
5 He that overcometh, the same shall be

clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father,
6 and before his angels. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

7 And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth; (behold I have set before thee an
8 open door, and no man can shut it). I know thy works: *that* thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast
9 not denied my name. Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that
10 I have loved thee. Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them
11 that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

Philadelphia.

12 Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.

13 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Laodicea. 14 And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the 15 beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor 16 hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of 17 my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou are wretched, and miserable, and 18 poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich: and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou 19 mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and 20 repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

21 To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my 22 Father in his throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

THE PROLOGUE IN HEAVEN

A vision of heaven.

4 After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which
2 must be hereafter. And immediately I was in the Spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.
3 And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone:[1] and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight
4 like unto an emerald. And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they
5 had on their heads crowns of gold. And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices; and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the
6 throne. And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and round about the throne, were four *cherubim*[2] full
7 of eyes before and behind. And the first *cherub* was like a lion, and the second *cherub* like a calf, and the third *cherub* had a face as a man, and the fourth *cherub* was
8 like a flying eagle. And the four *cherubim* had each of them six wings about him; and they rest not day and night, saying,

[1] Ezek. i. 26–28.
[2] Ezek. x. 14.

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty,
9 which was, and is, and is to come. And
when those *cherubim* give glory and honour
and thanks to him that *sitteth* on the throne,
10 who liveth for ever and ever, the four and
twenty elders fall down before him that
sitteth on the throne, and worship him that
liveth for ever and ever, and cast their
11 crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art
worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour
and power: for thou hast created all things,
and for thy pleasure they are and were
created.

The book of fate.

5 And I saw in the right hand of him that
sat on the throne a book written [1] within
and on the backside, sealed with seven seals.
2 And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with
a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the
3 book, and to loose the seals thereof? And
no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither
under the earth, was able to open the
4 book, neither to look thereon. And I wept
much, because no man was found worthy
to open and to read the book, neither to
5 look thereon. And one of the elders saith
unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of
the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath
prevailed to open the book, and to loose
6 the seven seals thereof. And I beheld, and,
lo, *between* the throne and the four *cherubim*
and the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been
slain, having seven horns and seven eyes,

[1] Ezek. ii. 9, 10.

which are the seven Spirits of God sent
7 forth into all the earth. And he came and
took the book out of the right hand of him
that sat upon the throne.

8 And when he had taken the book, the The Lamb.
four *cherubim* and four and twenty elders fell
down before the Lamb, having every one of
them harps, and golden vials full of *incense*.
9 And they sung a new song, saying, Thou
art worthy to take the book, and to open
the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and
hast redeemed to God by thy blood *men* out
of every kindred, and tongue, and people,
10 and nation; and hast made *them* unto our
God kings and priests: and *they* shall
11 reign on the earth. And I beheld, and I
heard the voice of many angels round
about the throne and the *cherubim* and the
elders: and the number of them was ten
thousand times ten thousand, and thousands
12 of thousands; saying with a loud voice,
Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to
receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and
strength, and honour, and glory, and
13 blessing. And every creature which is in
heaven, and on the earth, and under the
earth, and such as are in the sea, and all
that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing,
and honour, and glory, and power, be unto
him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto
14 the Lamb for ever and ever. And the four
cherubim said, Amen. And the four and
twenty elders fell down and worshipped.

THE FIRST SIX SEALS

The four horses.

6 And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four *cherubim* saying,
2 Come. And I saw, and behold a white horse: [1] and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.
3 And when he had opened the second seal,
4 I heard the second *cherub* say, Come. And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.
5 And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third *cherub* say, Come. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his
6 hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four *cherubim* say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil
7 and the wine. And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the
8 fourth *cherub* say, Come. And I looked and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death; and power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth.

The martyrs.

9 And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that

[1] Zech. vi. 1–8.

were slain for the word of God, and for the
10 testimony which they held: and they
cried with a loud voice, saying, How long,
O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge
and avenge our blood on them that dwell
11 on the earth? And white robes were
given unto every one of them; and it was
said unto them, that they should rest yet
for a little season, until their fellowservants
also and their brethren, that should be
killed as they were, should be fulfilled.

12 And I beheld when he had opened the The terror.
sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earth-
quake; and the sun became black as sack-
cloth of hair, and the moon became as
13 blood; and the stars of heaven fell unto
the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her
untimely figs, when she is shaken of a
14 mighty wind. And the heaven *parted,*
being rolled up as a scroll; and every
mountain and island were moved out of
15 their places. And the kings of the earth,
and the *princes,* and the chief captains,
and the rich, and the mighty, and every
bondman, and every free man, hid[1] them-
selves in the dens and in the rocks of the
16 mountains; and said to the mountains and
rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the
face of him that sitteth on the throne, and
17 from the wrath of the Lamb: for the
great day of his wrath is come; and who
shall be able to stand?

[1] Isa. ii. 10; Hosea x. 8.

The faithful sealed.

7 And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor
2 on the sea, nor on any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and
3 the sea, saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed[1] the servants of our God in their foreheads.
4 And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.

THE SEVENTH SEAL

Silence in heaven.

8 And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the
3 space of half an hour. And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar
4 which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before
5 God out of the angel's hand. And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there

[1] Ezek. ix. 4.

were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake.

2 And I saw *three* angels which stood before God ; and to them were given three trumpets.
6 And the *three* angels which had the *three* trumpets prepared themselves to sound.
13 And I beheld, and heard an *eagle* flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabiters of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are *about* to sound !

9 And the *first* angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth : and to him was given the key of the pit *of the* 2 *abyss*. And he opened the pit *of the abyss ;* and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace ; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the 3 smoke of the pit. And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth : and unto them was given power, as the scorpions 4 of the earth have power. And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree ; but only those men which have not the seal of God in 5 their foreheads. And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months : and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man. And in 6 those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it ; and shall desire to die, and

The first woe.

7 death shall flee from them. And the shapes
of the locusts [1] were like unto horses pre-
pared unto battle; and on their heads were
as it were crowns like gold, and their faces
8 were as the faces of men. And they had
hair as the hair of women, and their teeth
9 were as the teeth of lions. And they had
breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron;
and the sound of their wings was as the
sound of chariots, *yea*, of many horses
10 running to battle. And they had tails like
unto scorpions, and stings: *and* in their
tails *is* their power to hurt men five months.
11 And they had a king over them, which is
the angel of the *abyss: his* name in the
Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the
Greek tongue hath *the* name Apollyon.
12 *The first* woe is past: behold, there come
two woes more hereafter.

The second woe.

13 And the *second* angel sounded, and I
heard a voice from the horns of the golden
altar which is before God, saying to the
14 angel which had the trumpet, Loose the
four angels which are bound *at* the great
15 river Euphrates. And the four angels were
loosed, which *had been* prepared for *the*
hour, and day, and month, and year, for to
16 slay the third part of men. And the
number of the *armies* of the horsemen *was*
twice ten thousand times ten thousand: and
17 I heard the number of them. And thus I
saw the horses in the vision, and them that
sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and

[1] Joel ii. 4, 5.

of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and
18 smoke and brimstone. By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone,
19 which issued out of their mouths. For their power is in their mouths, and with
20 them they do hurt. And the rest of *mankind* which were not killed by these plagues, yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see,
21 nor hear, nor walk: neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

11 *And the third angel* sounded; and there The third woe.
15 were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdom of this world *is* become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he
16 shall reign for ever and ever. And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and wor-
17 shipped God, saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and *which* wast; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast *become King*.
18 And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and *the time to* destroy them which destroy the earth, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, *the* small and *the* great; and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets,

and the saints, and them that fear thy
19 name.[1] And the temple of God was opened
in heaven, and there was seen in his temple
the ark of his *covenant:* and there were
lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and
an earthquake, and great hail.

THE BEAST AND HIS PROPHET

The Beast. 13 And I saw a beast rise up out of the sea,
having seven heads and ten horns, and
upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his
2 heads the name of blasphemy. And the
beast which I saw was like unto a leopard,
and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and
his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the
dragon gave him his power, and his *throne,*
3 and great authority. And I saw one of his
heads as it were wounded to death; and his
deadly wound was healed: and all the world
4 wondered *when it saw* the beast. And they
worshipped the dragon which gave power
unto the beast: and they worshipped the
beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast?
5 who is able to make war with him? And
there was given unto him a mouth speaking
6 great things and blasphemies. And he
opened his mouth in blasphemy against
God, to blaspheme his name, and his
tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.
And power was given unto him to continue
7 forty and two months. And it was given

[1] The clauses of this verse have been restored to their original order.

unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and
8 nations. And all that dwelt upon the earth worshipped him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb
9 slain from the foundation of the world. If
10 any man have an ear, let him hear. He that *is for* captivity shall go into captivity: he that *is to be slain* with the sword, with the sword *must he be slain*. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

The second Beast who is his prophet.

11 And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, *but he was a destroyer like the*
12 dragon. And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly
13 wound was healed. And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of
14 men. And *he* deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a
15 sword, and did live. And he had power to give *breath* unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should speak, and *to* cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.

The persecution

16 And he causeth all, both small and great,
rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a
mark in their right hand, or in their fore-
17 heads: and that no man might buy or
sell, save he that had the mark, the name
of the beast, or the number of his name.
18 Here is wisdom. Let him that hath under-
standing count the number of the beast:
for it is the number of a man; and his
number is Six hundred threescore and six.

14 Here is the patience of the saints: here
12 are they that keep the commandments of
13 God, and the faith of Jesus. And I heard
a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write,
Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord
from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit,
that they may rest from their labours; and
their works *go with* them.

The song of the martyrs

15 And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled
2 with fire: and them that had gotten the
victory over the beast, and over his image,
and over his mark, and over the number of
his name, stand on the sea of glass, having
3 the harps of God, *and singing* the song of
the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous
are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just
and true are thy ways, thou King of *the*
4 *nations*. Who shall not fear, O Lord, and
glorify thy name? for thou only art holy:
for all nations shall come and worship
before thee; for thy *righteous acts* are made
manifest.

THE SEVEN VIALS

15 5 And after that I looked, and, behold, the
6 temple of *God* in heaven was opened: and
seven angels came out of the temple,
clothed in pure and white linen, and having
their breasts girded with golden girdles.
7 And one of the four *cherubim* gave unto the
seven angels seven golden vials full of the
wrath of God, who liveth for ever and
8 ever. And the temple was filled with
smoke from the glory of God, and from his
power; and no man was able to enter
into the temple, till the seven plagues of
the seven angels were fulfilled.

The seven angels.

16 And I heard a great voice out of the
temple saying to the seven angels, Go your
ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath
2 of God upon the earth. And the first went,
and poured out his vial upon the earth;
and there fell a noisome and grievous sore
3 upon men. And the second angel poured
out his vial upon the sea; and it became as
the blood of a dead man: and every living
4 soul died in the sea. And the third angel
poured out his vial upon the rivers and
fountains of waters; and they became
8 blood. And the fourth angel poured out
his vial upon the sun; and power was given
9 unto him to scorch men with fire. And
men were scorched with great heat, and
blasphemed the name of God, which hath
power over these plagues: and they repented
10 not to give him glory. And the fifth angel

The first five vials.

poured out his vial upon the *throne* of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; [1] and they gnawed their tongues for
11 pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.

The sixth vial.

12 And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared.
13 And I saw three unclean spirits out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the
14 false prophet, *going* forth unto the kings of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.
16 And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.

The seventh vial.

17 And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the
18 throne, saying, It is done. And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so
19 mighty an earthquake, and so great. And the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the
20 fierceness of his wrath. And every island fled away, and the mountains were not

[1] Some sentences have evidently been lost here. They must have explained what were the pains which caused men to gnaw their tongues.

21 found. And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great.

THE FALL OF ROME

17 And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great harlot that sitteth upon many waters: The great harlot.
2 with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been drunk with the wine
3 of her fornication. So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven
4 heads and ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and *of the unclean things* of
5 her fornication: and upon her forehead was a name written, *a mystery*, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF THE HARLOTS AND
6 THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.

The mystery of the Beast explained.

7 And the angel said unto me, Wherefore
didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the
mystery of the woman, and of the beast
that carrieth her, which hath the seven
8 heads and ten horns. The beast that thou
sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend
out of the *abyss*, and go into perdition:
and they that dwell on the earth shall
wonder, whose names were not written in
the book of life from the foundation of the
world, when they behold the beast that was,
9 and is not, and yet is *to come*. And here is
the mind which hath wisdom. The seven
10 heads are seven kings: five are fallen, and
one is, and the other is not yet come; and
when he cometh, he must continue a short
11 space. And the beast that was, and is
not, even he is the eighth, and is of the
seven, and goeth into perdition.
12 And the ten horns which thou sawest
are ten kings, which have received no
kingdom as yet; but receive power as
13 kings one hour *along* with the beast. These
have one mind, and give their power and
17 *authority* unto the beast. For God hath
put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and give
their kingdom unto the beast, until the
16 words of God shall be fulfilled. And the ten
horns which thou sawest, *and* the beast,
these shall hate the *harlot*, and shall make
her desolate and naked, and shall eat her
14 flesh, and burn her with fire. These
shall make war with the Lamb, and
the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is

Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they *also shall overcome* that are with him,
18 called and chosen and faithful. And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.

The guilt of Rome.

18 And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great *authority;* and the earth was lightened
2 with his glory. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon [1] the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and
3 hateful bird. For *she hath made* all nations *to drink* of the wine of the wrath of her fornication; *for* the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the *wealth* of her *wantonness.*
4 And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people,[2] that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that
5 ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God
6 hath remembered her iniquities. *Render unto* her even as she *rendered,* and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath *mingled mingle*
7 *unto* her double. How much she hath glorified herself, and *played the wanton,* so much torment and sorrow give her. *Because*

[1] Isa. xxi. 9. [2] Isa. xlviii. 20.

she saith in her heart,[1] I sit a queen, and am
8 no widow, and shall see no sorrow, therefore
shall her plagues come in one day, *pestilence*,
and mourning, and famine; and she shall
be utterly burned with fire: for strong is
the Lord God who judgeth her.

The dirges for her fall.

9 And the kings of the earth, who have
committed fornication and lived *wantonly*
with her, shall bewail her, and lament for
her, when they shall see the smoke of her
10 burning, standing afar off for the fear of
her torment, saying, Alas, alas that great
city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one
hour is thy judgment come.

11 And the merchants[2] of the earth shall
weep and mourn over her; for no man
12 buyeth their merchandise any more—mer-
chandise of gold, and silver, and precious
stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and
purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine
wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and
all manner vessels of most precious wood,
13 and of brass, and iron, and marble, and
cinnamon, and *spice, and incense*, and oint-
ments, and frankincense, and wine, and
oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts,
15 and sheep, and souls of men. The mer-
chants of these things, which were made
rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear
of her torment, weeping and wailing, and
6 saying, Alas, alas that great city, that was
clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet,

[1] Isa. xlvii. 7–9.
[2] Ezek. xxvii.

and decked with gold, and precious stones,
17 and pearls! For in one hour so great
riches is come to nought.

And every shipmaster,[1] and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as
18 trade by sea, stood afar off, and cried when
they saw the smoke of her burning, saying,
What city is like unto this great city?
19 And they cast dust on their heads, and
cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas,
alas, that great city, wherein were made rich
all that had ships in the sea! for in one
hour *are her precious things laid waste.*

21 And a mighty angel took up a stone like
a great millstone, and cast it into the sea,
saying, Thus with violence shall that great
city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be
found no more at all.

14 And the fruits that thy soul lusted after The Seer's faunt song.
are departed from thee, and all things
which were dainty and goodly are departed
22 from thee. And the voice of harpers, and
musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters,
shall be heard no more at all in thee;[2] and
no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be,
shall be found any more in thee; and the
sound of a millstone shall be heard no more
23 at all in thee; and the light of a candle
shall shine no more at all in thee; and the
voice of the bridegroom and of the bride
shall be heard no more at all in thee.

20 Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye
holy apostles and prophets; for God hath

[1] Ezek. xxvii. [2] Ezek. xxvi. 13.

24 avenged you on her. For *with her* sorceries were all nations deceived. And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.

Rejoicing in heaven.

19 And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour,
2 and power, *belong to* our God: for true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great *harlot*, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her
3 hand. And again they said, Alleluia: *for* her smoke [1] *goeth* up for ever and ever.
4 And the four and twenty elders and the four *cherubim* fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen;
16 Alleluia. Thou art righteous, O Lord, which
6 art, and wast. *Holy art Thou*, because thou hast judged thus. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy.
7 And I heard the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy
8 judgments.
19 And a voice came out of the throne,
5 saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great.

[1] Isa. xxxiv. 10.

THE MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB

6 And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God
7 omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his
8 *bride* hath made herself ready. *Yea, to her it hath been* granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white:
9 And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.

ARMAGEDDON

11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and he that sat upon him called Faithful and True; and in righteous-
12 ness he doth judge and make war. His eyes *are* as a flame of fire, and on his head
13 *are* many crowns. And he *is* clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name
14 is called The Word of God. And the armies which *are* in heaven follow him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen,
15 white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, [1] that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall *break* them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth [2] the

The army of heaven.

[1] Isa. xlix. 2.
[2] Isa. lxiii. 8.

winepress of the fierceness and wrath of
16 Almighty God. And he hath on his thigh
a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD
OF LORDS.

The proclamation. 17 And I saw an angel standing in the sun;
and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all
the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven,
Come and gather yourselves together unto
the *great* supper of God; that ye may eat
18 the flesh of kings,[1] and the flesh of captains,
and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh
of horses, and of them that sit on them, and
the flesh of all men, both free and bond,
both small and great.

The victory. 19 And I saw the beast, and the kings of the
earth, and their armies, gathered together to
make war against him that sat on the horse,
20 and against his army. And the beast was
taken, and with him the false prophet that
wrought miracles before him, with which he
deceived them that had received the mark
of the beast, and them that worshipped his
image. These both were cast alive into a lake
21 of fire burning with brimstone. And the
remnant were slain with the sword of him
that sat upon the horse, *even the sword* which
proceeded out of his mouth: and all the
fowls were filled with their flesh.

Satan bound. 20 And I saw an angel come down from
heaven, having the key of the *abyss* and a
2 great chain in his hand. And he laid hold
on the dragon, that old serpent, which is
the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a

[1] Ezek. xxxix. 4, 20.

3 thousand years, and cast him into the *abyss*, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: after that he must be loosed a little season.

THE HEAVENLY JERUSALEM

21 9 And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee 10 the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy *city*, Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: The Lamb's bride.

11 12 13 14 15 16 And her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; and had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel:[1] on the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and *on* them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. And the city lieth four- The plan of the city.

[1] Ezek. xlviii. 31–34.

square, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it
17 are equal. And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of *an* angel.

The materials.

18 And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like
19 unto clear glass. And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald;
20 the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolyte; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the
21 twelfth, an amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.

Life in the city.

22 And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the
23 temple of it. And the city *hath* no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God *doth* lighten it, and the
24 Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations shall walk *by* the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour
25 into it. And the gates of it shall not be
26 shut at all by day *or by night*. And they

shall bring the glory and honour of the
27 nations into it. And there shall in no wise enter into it any *that is unclean, or* worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but *only* they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.

22 And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of
2 the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

14 Blessed are they that *wash their robes,* that they may have *the* right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the
15 city. Without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.
17 And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

The heathen without.

THE MILLENNIUM, THE JUDGMENT, AND THE NEW JERUSALEM

20 And I saw the souls of them that were
4 beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads,

The reign of the saints.

and upon their hands. And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and they lived and
5 reigned with Christ a thousand years. This
6 is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

Satan's last effort.

7 And when the thousand years *were* expired, Satan *was* loosed out of his prison,
8 and *went* out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand
9 of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of
10 heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are; and *they* shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

The last judgment.

11 And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was
12 found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before *the throne;* and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the

13 books. And the *treasuries* gave up the dead
which were in *them;* and death and hell
delivered up the dead which were in them:
and they were judged every man according
14 to their works. And death and hell were
15 cast into the lake of fire. And whosoever
was not found written in the book of life
was cast into the lake of fire.

21 And he that sat upon the throne said, The new world.
5 Behold, I make all things new, for the
former things are passed away.

1 And I saw a new heaven and a new
earth: for the first heaven and the first
earth were passed away; and there *is* no
2 more sea. And I John saw the holy city,
new Jerusalem, coming down from God out
of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for
3 her husband. And I heard a great voice out
of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of
God is with men, and he will dwell with
them, and they shall be his people, and God
himself shall be with them, and be their God.
4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their
eyes; and there shall be no more death,
neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall
22 there be any more pain: and there shall be
3 no more curse. But the throne of God and
of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants
4 shall serve him: and they shall see his face;
and his name shall be in their foreheads.
5 And there shall be no night there; and they
need no candle, neither light of the sun; for
the Lord God *shall give* them light: and
they shall reign for ever and ever.

EPILOGUE

The promise of God.

21 And he *that sitteth on the throne* said unto
me, Write: for these words are true and
6 faithful. And he said unto me, It is done.
I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and
the end. I will give unto him that is
athirst of the fountain of the water of life
7 freely. He that overcometh shall inherit
these things; and I will be his God, and he
8 shall be my son. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

The witness of Jesus Christ.

22 And he said unto me, These sayings are
6 faithful and true: and the Lord God of the
holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto
his servants the things which must shortly
7 be done. Behold, I come quickly: blessed
is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book. I Jesus have sent mine
16 angel to testify unto you these things in the
churches. I am the root and the offspring
of David, and the bright and morning star.
12 And, behold, I come quickly; and my
reward is with me, to give every man
13 according as his work shall be. I am Alpha
and Omega, the beginning and the end, the
first and the last.
10 And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings
of the prophecy of this book: for the time
is at hand.

8 And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the 9 angel which shewed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the 20 sayings of this book: worship God. He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, 21 Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

The witness of John.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE MARTYRS

7 And after these things I saw four angels standing *at* the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on 2 the sea, nor on any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, 3 saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants 4 of our God in their foreheads. And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children 5 of Israel. Of the tribe of Juda were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe

The sealing on earth.

6 of Gad were sealed twelve thousand. Of
the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand.
Of the tribe of Nepthalim were sealed twelve
thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses were
7 sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of
Simeon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the
tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand.
Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve
8 thousand. Of the tribe of Zabulon were
sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of
Joseph were sealed twelve thousand. Of the
tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve
thousand.

The triumph in heaven.

9 After this I beheld, and, lo, a great
multitude, which no man could number, of
all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and
tongues, stood before the throne, and before
the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and
10 palms in their hands; and cried with a loud
voice, saying, Salvation to our God which
sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.
11 And all the angels stood round about the
throne, and about the elders and the four
cherubim, and fell before the throne on their
12 faces, and worshipped God, saying, Amen:
Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and
thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and
might, be unto our God for ever and ever.
13 Amen. And one of the elders answered,
saying unto me, What are these which are
arrayed in white robes? and whence came
14 they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou
knowest. And he said to me, These are
they which came out of *the* great tribulation,

and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.
15 Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell
16 among them. They shall hunger[1] no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the
17 sun *smite* them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall *be their shepherd*, and shall lead them unto *the* fountains of *the* waters *of life*: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.[2]

VISION OF THE ANTICHRIST IN JERUSALEM

10 And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his legs
2 as pillars of fire: and he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth,
3 and cried with a loud voice, as a lion roareth: and when he had cried, seven
4 thunders uttered their voices. And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered,
5 and write them not. And the angel which

The Seer's commission.

[1] Isa. xlix. 10.
[2] Isa. xxv. 8.

I saw stand upon the sea and upon the
6 earth lifted up his hand to heaven, and
sware [1] by him that liveth for ever and ever,
who created heaven, and the things that
therein are, and the earth, and the things
that therein are, and the sea, and the things
which are therein, that there should be *no*
7 *more delay:* but in the days of the voice of
the *third* angel, when he shall begin to sound,
the purpose of God should be fulfilled, as he
hath declared to his servants the prophets.
8 And the voice which I heard from heaven
spake unto me again, and said, Go and take
the little book [2] which is open in the hand
of the angel which standeth upon the sea
9 and upon the earth. And I went unto the
angel, and said unto him, Give me the
little book. And he said unto me, Take it,
and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly
bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as
10 honey. And I took the little book out of
the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was
in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon
as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter.
11 And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy
again before many peoples, and nations,
and tongues, and kings.

The two martyrs in Jerusalem.

11 And *he gave* me a reed like unto a rod,
saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God,
and the altar, and them that worship
2 therein. But the court which is without
the temple leave out, and measure it not;

[1] Dan. xii. 7.
[2] Ezek. ii. 8; iii. 3.

for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty
3 and two months. And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and three-
4 score days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees,[1] and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth.
5 And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth
6 their enemies. These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.
7 And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the *abyss* shall make war against them, and
8 shall overcome them, and kill them. And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also *their* Lord
9 was crucified. And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall *look upon* their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies
10 to be put in graves. And they that dwell *in the land* shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another: because these two prophets tormented them
11 that dwelt *in the land*. And after three days and an half the *breath* of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon

[1] Zech. iv.

their feet; and great fear fell upon them
12 which saw them. And they heard a great
voice from heaven saying unto them, Come
up hither. And they ascended up to
heaven in a cloud; and their enemies be-
13 held them. And the same hour was there
a great earthquake, and the tenth part of
the city fell, and in the earthquake were
slain of men seven thousand: and the
remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to
the God of heaven.
14 The second woe is past; and, behold, the
third woe cometh quickly.

SATAN'S PAST HISTORY

The woman and the dragon.

12 And there appeared a great wonder in
heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and
the moon under her feet, and upon her head
2 a crown of twelve stars: And she *was* with
child and cried *out*, travailing in birth, and
3 *in pain* to be delivered. And there ap-
peared another wonder in heaven; and
behold a great red dragon, having seven
heads [1] and ten horns, and seven crowns
4 upon his heads. And his tail drew the
third part of the stars [2] of heaven, and did
cast them to the earth: and the dragon
stood before the woman which was ready to
be delivered, for to devour her child as
5 soon as it was born. And she brought
forth a man child, who *shall break* all nations

[1] Dan. vii. 7.
[2] Dan. viii. 10.

with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.
6 And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.

Satan cast down from heaven.

7 And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon;
8 and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place
9 found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast *down to* the earth, and his angels were cast *down* with
10 him. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and *power*, and the kingdom of our God, and the *authority* of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accuseth
11 them before our God day and night. And they overcame him *because of* the blood of the Lamb, and *because of* the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives
12 unto the death. Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the earth and the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.

The woman's deliverance.

13 And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child.
14 And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the

wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a
15 time, from the face of the serpent. And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. And
16 the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his
17 mouth. And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

13 And he stood upon the sand of the sea.

A FORECAST OF THE LAST THINGS

The Lamb descends with his train of martyrs.

14 And I looked, and, lo, *the* Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having *his name and* his Father's name written in their fore-
2 heads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps,
3 and *singing* as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four *cherubim*, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were *purchased* from the
4 earth. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were *purchased* from among men, being the first-

fruits unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without *blemish*.

Judgment pronounced on Babylon and the Beast.

And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters. And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, *which* made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication. And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive *the* mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink [1] of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: and the smoke [2] of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.

The wine-press trodden.

And I looked, and behold a white cloud,[3]

[1] Isa. li. 17.
[2] Isa. xxxiv. 10.
[3] Dan. vii. 13.

and upon the cloud one sat like unto *a son* of man, having on his head a golden crown,
18 and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle [1] and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth ;
19 for her grapes are fully ripe. And *he* thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great
20 winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.

[1] Joel iv. 9–14.

THE END

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